

THE CANADIAN THEOSOPHIST

Divine Wisdom

Brotherhood

Occult Science

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A RECONSIDERATION OF KARMA

ALVIN BOYD KUHN, PH. D.

(Concluded from Page 128)

Perhaps it will be contended that after all we must meet the effects of past action and that our essay only asks us to use some different phrases in our talk about it. Will the new phraseology enable us to ease the burden of our past? Our claim is that indeed the psychological effect of a change of phrases, reflecting a change of philosophical view, will be tremendously helpful and cheering. If properly focused understanding does not help us better than wrong ideation, then true philosophy is not the saviour we have pronounced it. I think it is going to help us all to ease if not to lift from off our backs that Pilgrim's pack if we know that we have not *made* our Karma, but that we can run it off well or ill.

Our general thinking and phrasing leaves our position open to the logical conclusion that if good acts along the line of climb generate good Karma and unwise acts evil Karma, then the only way to escape Karma would be not to act at all. But this is not possible. Man can not evolve into his glory without action. His Karma is to have been thrust into the field of life where action is the law and the necessity. To evolve

through Karmic action is his lot. "I have set before you life and death," says Deity in the Old Testament. We are given the choice between good or evil action, but not the choice as between action and non-action. One of our own maxims brings out the truth that inaction in this sphere is a form of evil action. The soul, facing its cycle of necessity, may at times shrink from the long course of action—and its consequences. But the path of action must be adventured.

Beyond question this very thing is the burden of The Lord's Song in the *Bhagavad Gita*, in which Arjuna shrinks from the repellent aspects of the conflict between the good and evil forces. But Krishna tells him that he *must* fight, striking his blows for the side of abstract principle, let the wounds fall where they may. Arjuna would have refused all Karma, by not entering the field of battle. This is indeed the "crime" accounted against the legions of the Asuras. They refused to take position on the horizon line between good and evil, which is precisely where the great Egyptian wisdom tells us the Battle of Armageddon is fought.

Thought was first turned in the direction of these considerations by the re-

flection that formed in mind at one time that certainly in all lives there *must* come stages at which the individual must have "worked off" all his past adverse Karma and stand free from immediate necessity of "paying off old debts." According to the frame of thought in which the doctrine is generally set, there could then be no more evil to befall a man, until he violated the law of good afresh, or went out and *made* some more bad Karma for himself. Surely it can not be that we are all eternally hounded by evil Karma, that we never emerge from under the shadow of our past. We must now and then along the way clear off all outstanding obligation and face a cleared slate. Yet we can, and do, still run into misfortune. Then we face the problem of explaining how suffering or adversity can come to us when all past Karma has been cleared. Obviously there *must* be *some* bad Karma that has nothing to do with the *past*. Where then can we turn for explanation? Certainly the *future* can not cause it: it has not yet happened! Am I going to ask Theosophists to consider that the future can reach back into our past and generate our present Karma? Indeed I am! For the future *has* already happened, nomenclally, archetypally, in the *mind* of the Creator and that future is the one and only *cause* of all the Karma that ever was.

It may appear the logic of fatuity to attempt to demonstrate this thesis, but that is the task of this essay. Indeed the thesis becomes so obviously true upon sober reflection that for Theosophic thought of seventy-five years to have missed it must henceforth be viewed as a matter of almost incredible obtuseness.

In any common enterprise it will be admitted without hesitation that it is the future that determines all action. A man plans to build a house, a king a

city, an army to win a war. The future objective, rather than past things determines every action. The past conditions it, but the future determines it. The past only marks the point and the incentive of new departure. Its acquired lessons, its harvest of weal or woe already reaped, give impetus, form and direction to new departures. But goals set the purpose for future attainment and inspire every move. As a matter of fact the truth is that man's action is, as the Egyptian "horizon" symbol so accurately analogized it, poised right on the middle ground between purpose pointed ahead and conditions established behind. The Christ within us was called the "Lord of the Balance," represented by the Libra sign in the zodiac, because in incarnation he stands right between the past and the present and pulls toward the future, his action conditioned by the past. This element of Greek Theosophy has not been adequately exploited in Theosophic life.

There is in play here a great philosophical principle which again Theosophic view has failed to consider in due measure. Such view has almost wholly regarded human action as, to coin a phrase, "being pushed from behind," in nearly total disregard of the true fact that it is being "pulled from in front."

Our own Theosophic philosophy lays down the fundamental thesis that God, life, evolution has a plan for man and that man's course of unfoldment and growth is the fulfilment of this plan. Well, then, it is the simplest of logical determinations to assume that Karma guides the individual's actions in those courses that will best conduce to the consummation of the destiny already in view and consciously aimed at by the Powers of Life. It is the most naive reasoning to predicate the assumption that one's life-actions are to be considered for value in reference to their

promoting or hindering the movement toward the distant goal. Conditioned for character by past experience they are still and always shaped and directed by their reference to progress toward the mark ahead, which is already fixed by the mind of Divine Purpose.

Indeed it is not putting it too strongly to assert that all Karmic action is thus engineered with an eye to the future. Success or failure, happiness or wretchedness, joy or gloom are *not* thrust upon us primarily as the result of our past errancy. They are conditions which our good or bad handling of Life's opportunities and powers provide for us as the schoolmasters under whose severe tutelage we will learn to exercise the divinity that would otherwise slumber on unawakened within us. Even though we may have cleared off old Karma, we have still more lessons to learn. How will we get that higher education? Only by being placed in new situations putting us under additional testing. New problems must be set for our solution and mastery. "New occasions teach new duties," sang Lowell in his poem, *The Present Crisis*. New stresses and pressures must be borne, so that more of our innate potential will be drawn forth to expression. As the push of the past weakens, the call of the future lures all the more appealingly.

Theosophic philosophy has done lip service to the proposition that all life is an education, which by its etymology means a "drawing out" of potential capacity into actual manifestation. But it has not recognized the full play of the idea in relation to Karma. Surely it is not primarily the past that spurs us on to education, but the beckoning of what it promises for the future. Beyond question the dominant emphasis should ever be placed on the realization that Karma is the education for that glory that awaits when one has traversed the long track up the mountainside. Our

Karma is apportioned to us as our allotment of action and exertion through which our forward march to divinity is to be achieved. So the Greeks called it our lot, our Fate, the decree of Moira or Destiny. Blessedness ensued if we met its requirements with steadfastness and growing intelligence; tragedy, which loomed so forbiddingly in the eyes of the Greeks, followed upon our sad neglect of opportunity, our sluggish inertness. Both Greek moral systems and Old Testament theocratic conception were strong in assigning to the results of human waywardness, dereliction and disobedience the character of punishment. The Greeks even asserted that man is sent into the valley of the shadow of "death" as penalty for former transgressions in pre-Mundane fields of life. But this is again a use of the term "punishment" in its narrow and limited relative sense, considered as sheer consequence, as surely the law operates to execute its decrees with no semblance of vengeful human motivation. The character of moral neutrality that can be applied to the exigencies of one cycle of incarnation will likewise apply to the larger cycles or to the whole course. The idea of punishment, in the human vindictive sense, must be completely eliminated from Theosophic thought. Life does not slap in anger at its children in the fashion of an irate parent; it applies natural consequences for purposes of education.

Not the painful whiplash of an errant past but the irresistible lure of a Paradise of beauty and delight stretching out ahead of us leads us into ever new trials and predicaments, involving the requisite amount of suffering. (Suffering, in its etymology, means simply the "undergoing" of experience. It need not necessarily be painful.) Pain itself, we saw, is "pedagogical," instructive. And we may be surprised to know that St. Paul calls the "sin and death"

experience of the soul while down here in body "holy," and "this good thing." (*Romans*, 7th chapter.)

Man stands, or hangs, poised between his past and his future. So every present moment is pregnant with future destiny. The vital element, we insist, is the mental attitude, the philosophical spirit in the light of which his present actions will be motivated and characterized. As the esoteric wisdom teaches us, all *right* action is gestated, so to say, out of *right* understanding, *right* knowledge. The right focus of the mind is therefore virtually the maker of destiny. To focus the mind on one's subjection, one's victimization under the power of one's past is not a true or salutary posture: The far more helpful attitude is the spirit of vivid eagerness for the instruction which new experience will bring. With mind alert, of course, to catch the wisdom that past experience should have bred, the outlook on life should ever be coloured brightly by one's avid zest for the marvellous adventure in growth that life invites us into.

The common Theosophic envisagement of Karma has kept its devotees bound too heavily under the burden of the past. The consequences of this unwarranted mental attitude can have weighed heavily on the evil side. It keeps a cloud of wrong understanding hanging perpetually over the sun of right knowledge, obscuring clear vision and dampening the valiant spirit in the face of life's glorious adventure.

Nowhere perhaps is the sound philosophical elan with which we should meet our Karma better expressed than it is by St. Paul in the third chapter of *Philippians*, where he says: "But this one thing I do, *forgetting those things which are behind*, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God." These are

majestic words and they support our contention.

It is worth noting the remarkable coincidence of Paul's use of the word "calling" in the passage. The past is binding; but the future is calling, calling. Not to brood over the past, but to catch and heed that imperious call of the future is the true philosophical attitude, the posture of right knowledge.

We can profit by turning a moment to Aristotle's philosophy. The great light of his system of thought shines out in his principle which he called "entelechy." It is the principle of "teleology" in philosophy. (The *tel* in both words, as in *telephone* and *telegraph*, is the Greek word for "end".) The summation of all meaning in evolution is in that which comes to manifestation as the final or end product. The Mind that designed and initiated the drive of evolution has already conceived the purpose or goal to which the long run of growth from seed potential to end product will bring its creations. Teleology is the theory that life is working onward to a predetermined consummation of specific formal character. All things therefore have meaning and reference in a series or continuum linked together by their relation or contribution to the production of the last form, which was held steadily all the while in the consciousness of Deity to guide its operations toward the set goal. It is therefore Deity's vision of the future that governs the allotments of fate at any earlier stage of the cycle. Karma is determined wholly by this drive on the future goal. The past only conditions the rate, nature and colour of the progress.

If modern science can be seen to lend its support to this thesis, it must be considered well buttressed indeed. And modern science does most amazingly confirm the view as correct. For in the later corrections of the Darwinian

theory, biological science has made the definite and very revolutionary discovery that evolution, so far from being controlled, directed and changed by environment or experience, in all cases is the straight unfoldment of latent potential toward a goal "already set from the beginning." Evolution only brings to actualization the type-forms already implicit in the germ.

We should have known this all along, from merely observing the method of the growth of all things from seed. This simple natural analogy virtually enthrones this argument on Karma. The course and character is from the beginning determined by the fixation of its final goal. Life is the Alpha and the Omega of all things. It is potentially at the beginning what it is to be at the cycle's end; only noumenal at the outset, but phenomenally actual at the journey's end.

We happen to have before us at the moment a fine book, *The Meeting of East and West*, by a Yale Professor, F. S. C. Northrop. In discussing Aristotle's "formal" and "final" causes, he writes: "Thus, mechanical causation becomes invalid. Even inorganic objects and processes can be understood only teleologically in terms of their final state or goal." This could be modified to say that our Karma can be understood only in terms of its purpose to achieve our *final* goal. For that is already fixed in the mind of the creative Power, and all process is designed to conduce toward it. So it is evermore the future, not the past, that is determining our drive in life, our ups and downs of vicissitude.

Dr. Northrop says again: "The fertilized egg of the living creature, as it develops and differentiates itself, seems to be controlled by the *final* type of creature which it eventually produces. Thus the form as well as the matter, and the final form as well as the matter,

and the final form as well as the intermediate form, seem to be genuine *causal* principles and *not mere effects*." So it is the future that *causes* the past and the present!

Indeed in the great Aristotelian philosophy the consummative or final explanation of the *cause* of all motion and its direction in the universe is the "attraction" which all creatural being feels toward the beautiful glorious source of its generation. Strangely enough this mighty pronouncement of philosophy, well received by the thought-world in general, gives us the warrant for going the whole way in our declaration that in ultimate understanding Karma is *not caused* by the past at all, but wholly by the future. (We speak of past and future here of course in their signification for the human consciousness.) All things move *toward* their final state to be realized at the cycle's end. Rather than a pushing from behind, it is all a pulling from in front. Again Dr. Northrop writes: "The living organism comes into mature being because it is guided by its *final* cause, as its aim and pattern." Let Theosophists hear this again: guided by its final cause! "Every form of a developing system in the different stages of its development is the *effect* of the *final* form acting upon the material component of the substance." This revises all common—and our Theosophic—conception, as it makes the future effect the past cause. But this is no more bizarre and fantastic than is the realization that the fruit or final product of a tree is the cause of the seed or beginning form of new creation. The fruit is the seed; the seed is the fruit. "I am the beginning and the end," says Deity, and the end is in the beginning.

To turn the gaze from the past to the future is the intellectual task now set for Theosophical accomplishment. To quit asking in present exigencies, what

have I done in the past to have brought this upon me, and to ask instead, what vital new enlightenment is my experience designed to bring to me, is the nub of this task. This transfiguration of philosophical outlook could verily light up the face of Theosophy with something of a diviner radiance.

GENERAL EXECUTIVE

The Quarterly Meeting of the General Executive, Theosophical Society in Canada was held on Sunday, October 2, 1949, with the following members present: Miss M. Hindsley, Mr. Dudley Barr, Mr. N. W. J. Haydon, Mr. George I. Kinman and the General Secretary. Dr. Alvin Kuhn who was in Toronto for a series of lectures at the Toronto Lodge was invited to be present. The Financial Statement was discussed and approved. Mr. Barr reported for the Magazine and requested that his proposal for an Anniversary Cover for the Canadian Theosophist brought forward at the last meeting be carried over until the January meeting. The General Secretary stated that bound copies of Volumes XIX - XXIX were in process of binding and should soon be available. Mr. Sidney Cook's reply to the letter of sympathy from the General Executive was read. Dr. Kuhn outlined a scheme for augmenting or introducing Theosophy into places such as Windsor, Brantford and other cities where at present it was stagnant or not known, and promised to submit the proposal in writing for the approval and collaboration of the General Executive. The General Secretary was instructed to write a letter of sympathy to the Orpheus Lodge on the death of its secretary, the late Mr. Edwin Harper. Correspondence and a Voting List from Adyar on the subject of the transference of pictures of the Masters M. and K.H., aroused a keen discussion. Eventually it was unanim-

ously voted that the following Resolution be sent to Adyar immediately in view of the meeting of the General Council to be held at Benares in December "that the General Executive of the Theosophical Society in Canada protests against the Motion to transfer the pictures of the Masters M. and K.H. to the Esoteric School. The reasons given for the proposed action create the impression that the Society is held unworthy to continue as the owner of the pictures because members of the Theosophical Society are not required to believe in the Masters, and are permitted to hold various opinions concerning Them and the value of sacred pictures. This violation of the principles of freedom of belief and expression in the Society should be strongly condemned. The General Executive also recommends that as the pictures are for the Theosophical Movement, now and of the future, they should be removed from the custody of the Esoteric School and placed in some location at Headquarters where they may be viewed by all members who desire to do so." The next quarterly meeting was arranged for Sunday, January 8, 1950.

THE THREE TRUTHS

The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour have no limit.

The principle which gives life dwells in us, and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard or seen, or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception.

Each man is his own absolute law-giver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

These truths, which are as great as is life itself, are as simple as the simplest mind of man. Feed the hungry with them.—Idyll of the White Lotus.

NOTES AND COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Marriages in our organization are few and far between and when they occur are generally worthy of note. Recently one took place between two well known members of the Toronto Lodge, Mrs. Nancy Gough and Mr. Willard Stewart, both active and willing workers in that Lodge. Mr. Stewart for years has kept Theosophy before the public in various ways such as lecturing and writing frequent letters to the press on questions before the public. Mrs. Gough for years has had the onerous chore of mailing the magazine, with all its attendant distractions of changes of address and so forth. This she has carried on with commendable regularity and for which much praise and thanks are due her. We send our best wishes and compliments to both and trust that they will have a happy life together.

* * * *

It is with regret that we learn of the demise of Mrs. Frederick Hall of San Francisco, one of our oldest subscribers to the magazine and one who in spite of many vicissitudes was an ardent student of Theosophy, which she often stated, enabled her to sustain many heavy burdens. We extend to her daughter, Mrs. Salmon our deep commiseration in her sad loss.

* * * *

Many who read the report of the meeting of the General Executive will no doubt be somewhat at sea after perusing the Resolution that was sent to Adyar on the question of the transfer of the pictures of the Masters. But if they have read the article "Thou Shalt Not Covet" published in the October issue, the facts should be quite clear. The resolution was unanimously agreed to by all present and we all feel that the idea of making the pictures a part of a

closed corporation such as the Esoteric School is something to be energetically opposed. It is to be hoped that other Sections will see the matter in the same light as we do and vote against the resolution.

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We have much pleasure in welcoming the following new members into the Society: Mrs. Madeline Williams, Edmonton Lodge; Mrs. Elsie Stevens, Toronto Lodge; Miss Alva Vipond, Mrs. Mayford Roth and Mrs. Gwen. Leonard, all of Montreal Lodge.

E. L. T.

BLAVATSKY INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS

ESOTERIC CHARACTER OF THE GOSPELS
by H. P. Blavatsky.

THE EVIDENCE OF IMMORTALITY
by Dr. Jerome A. Anderson.

MODERN THEOSOPHY
by Claude Falls Wright.

THE BHAGAVAD GITA
A Conflation by Albert E. S. Smythe.

Owing to the higher costs of binding it has been necessary to increase the price of the above books to One Dollar (\$1.00) each.

ANCIENT AND MODERN PHYSICS

by Thomas E. Willson has been re-published by The American Philosopher Society and may be purchased through the Institute at the price of \$1.00.

THE EXILE OF THE SOUL

by Professor Roy Mitchell has been published in book form. Attractively bound in yellow cover stock. This sells at the price of \$1.00.

Copies of Professor Roy Mitchell's **COURSE IN PUBLIC SPEAKING** are still available at \$3.00 per set. This course was especially written for Theosophical students.

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OFFICE NOTES

Isolated students and those unable to have access to Theosophical literature should avail themselves of the Travelling Library conducted by the Toronto Theosophical Society. There are no charges except for postage on the volumes loaned. For particulars write to the Travelling Librarian, 52 Isabella Street, Toronto, Ont.



Every month some magazines are returned by the Canadian Postal Department with a note of change of address. Will our members and subscribers please try to send in their new addresses promptly. In some cases, undelivered

second-class mail is not returned nor forwarded and we have no record of non-receipt until a letter of complaint is received perhaps months later.



The Covina Theosophical Society has chartered a lodge in British Columbia, at Vancouver. It is called the William Quan Judge lodge and its president, Mrs. Jamieson, has been for some years a member of the Vancouver lodge T. S., in Canada, and still is. The new lodge owes its inception very largely to Mrs. Ethel W. Lambert who was a pupil of Katherine Tingley, and who is now dean of the Covina University. Mrs. Lambert came up to Vancouver recently to inaugurate the new lodge and gave a public address to which all members of the Theosophical lodges in Vancouver were invited. In her address Mrs. Lambert made a strong appeal for a more brotherly attitude between the members of the different Theosophical Societies.



Of interest to Biblical students is the discovery of the 'Lost Book of Lamech'. Dr. John C. Trevor, Head of the English Bible Department of the International Council on Religious Education, considers it 'the most important Bible discovery of modern times'. The discovery was made by 'chance' by a Bedouin lad who was herding goats and stumbled upon the entrance to a cave in a cliff side near the Dead Sea. Dr. Trevor is convinced of the authenticity of the discovery and the writings are now being translated. The Book of Lamech is apparently related to the apochryphal Book of Enoch, to which H.P.B. refers some twenty-three times in the first two volumes of the Secret Doctrine; Section viii of Vol. 3 is devoted to this Book and there are several other references in the Third Volume.

The other day we noted an illustrated article of a huge barbecue which had been held in a rural community. If we remember correctly the number of first class steers which had been slaughtered for the event was two hundred and fifty. By some odd coincidence we noted on the same evening, a little item tucked away in a corner of a newspaper giving an account of a religious service which had been held by the Buddhists of Kumanota, Japan, to commemorate 150,000 frogs which had been killed so that their legs might be exported to the United States as delicacies for gourmands. "Reverence for Life" which Dr. Schweitzer saw as the basis for ethics, was being expressed by those Buddhists, who in doing so were following the example of their great Founder. As told in *The Light of Asia*:

"Then craving leave, he spoke
Of Life which all can take but none can
give,
Life which all creatures love and strive
to keep,
Wonderful, dear, and pleasant unto
each,
Even to the meanest;
Unto the dumb lips of his flock he lent
Sad pleading words, showing how man,
who prays
For mercy to the gods, is merciless
Being as a god to those;"

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The Exile of the Soul by Roy Mitchell has now been published in book form by the Blavatsky Institute of Toronto. This is a very neat and handy edition of 155 pages, stitched, and bound in yellow cover stock, which sells at \$1.00 per copy. *The Exile* was Roy Mitchell's great contribution to occult thought and students everywhere will welcome the opportunity to purchase copies in book form. It may be bought through The Blavatsky Institute, 52 Isabella St., Toronto 5, Ont.

Word has been received from The Adyar Library of the printing of a second edition of *Where Theosophy and Science Meet*, revised, enlarged and reset. Vol. 1—Nature and Man, is now ready and copies will be on sale through the Book Concern of the Toronto Lodge as soon as a supply is received from India in about two months' time. The Canadian price will probably be about \$2.50.

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DR. ALVIN B. KUHN

Alvin B. Kuhn, Ph. D., the author of the article *A Reconsideration of Karma* which is concluded in this month's issue, is a member of many years' standing in the Theosophical Society. He gained his Ph. D. at Columbia University and his thesis for the degree was an exhaustive study of Theosophy and the Theosophical Movement. This thesis partly re-written and shortened, was later published by Henry Holt and Company under the title "Theosophy". This book which attracted much attention, first brought Dr. Kuhn to the notice of Theosophists in Canada. He lectured here in 1934 and was the first speaker in a series of radio broadcasts on Theosophy sponsored by the Toronto Lodge. Since that time he has visited Canada each year, lecturing in Toronto for a week and also speaking from time to time in Hamilton, Montreal and Ottawa.

Dr. Kuhn is deeply interested in the study of comparative religion and is the author of three other books, *The Lost Light; Who is this King of Glory?* and *Sex as Symbol*. He has recently completed another book, *Shadow of the Third Century* which is in course of publication and will be ready about the first of December. This book will deal with the distortions and the obscurations which were superimposed upon the

original doctrines of Christianity in that critical century.

Dr. Kuhn's life has been devoted to Theosophical scholarship. He is a painstaking, conscientious worker; in his books the esoteric significance of symbolism is presented in an orderly, carefully documented style and his conclusions follow logically from the premises he establishes. His books are definitely outstanding contributions to the literature of comparative religion and the esoteric interpretation of scriptures.

In regard to the present article, we expect that some of the statements made will come as a shock to some readers and that there will be criticisms of portions of it. But remember H.P.B.'s admonition, "Study well the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation." The merely mechanical operation of the law of cause and effect is one factor of what we call 'Karma'; the mystery of Karma, or what Mr. Judge refers to as the 'unknown and unknowable' aspects of the Great Law is something else again. "The Law that moves to righteousness" is more than the exact balancing of cause and effect. Dr. Kuhn has presented another viewpoint and his thoughts should receive careful consideration from all students.

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KARMA AND MR. FURZE MORRISH

The majority of the criticisms of the article *Sentimentality, Karma and Selective Thinking* by Mr. L. Furze Morrish which appeared in the August issue of the magazine, relate to the statement made in the article:

"What about masses of primitive egos of our Earth system, or those who have come from more backward systems to learn earth lessons? Are they to enjoy 'soft' conditions? The realistic fact seems to be that primitive Egos incarnate to learn certain simple lessons of

application to tasks, simple honesty and conscientious behaviour, etc. If they are given unduly soft conditions this end is being frustrated, and the primitive Egos lose their opportunity. Is this right? When masses of primitives work long hours to scrape a living from the soil, against famine, plague and disease, that is what they have come to learn. By dying of disease they learn to avoid the causes of disease. They have to learn the hard way. Therefore we ask—Have the more evolved, and softer-minded people any right to deny them?"

Mr. Leonard C. Soper, of London, England, who expressed his astonishment that in these days of paper shortage such an article should have been published at all, says: "This (the above quoted portion) is of course a variant of the old 'argument' employed by those who have to lull their conscience for that 'inaction in a deed of mercy which is a deadly sin'—that one must not interfere with the law of karma. It is an arrogant assumption than any being, human or otherwise, can 'interfere' with that law. It is of course always 'the other fellow' whose karma is being interfered with, the users of this 'argument' are not so anxious to have it turned against themselves. Mr. Morrish should know, as evidently he does not, that our business is to raise the general spiritual level of humanity. When our efforts have so far succeeded that the planet no longer affords a suitable field for the primitive Egos with whom Mr. Morrish is so concerned, they will be taken out of human evolution by the Lords of Karma, to await reincarnation on some other planet."

Mrs. Nann Tilly of Tacoma, Washington, writes: "By what authority does Mr. Furze Morrish make the above statement? I belong to that class, the 'masses', who have worked long hours to scrape a living from the soil. I do not consider us primitive at all. Some of us

had our lessons in application to tasks, simple honesty and conscientious behaviour eons ago. And are here now to help humanity that is floundering in the confusion of much knowledge and little wisdom, a humanity ignorant of the fact that it is dominated by self-appraised highly evolved Egos. 'When talking to brutal primitives one may have to use brutal language' as one brute to another as it were!"

A Student in Montreal who found the article "interesting, but limited and needing clarification — some of the statements could be dangerously misinterpreted," writes: "The statement concerning the Karma of the primitive masses is not Theosophical. It certainly is Karma misunderstood and I am surprised that it should come from the pen of one of our students. According to the author then for instance, the Czarist regime was right in denying to the primitive illiterate masses, the freedom and enlightenment which idealistic leaders were demanding for decades before the present world conflagration, only to be met with violence and bloodshed. The same applies to the yet 'primitive' Chinese masses. What authority have we to declare that they should be left in misery and withhold from them the genius of economic planning, irrigation, fertilization, the wiping out of illiteracy, etc."

Mr. Morrish also questioned the efficacy of attempting to "teach the criminal by love It is an uncomfortable thought that comes over one, after reading some of the disgusting brutalities perpetrated by gangsters for their own ends, that the Law of an Eye for an Eye is true as far as those at that level are concerned and that the Law of Love is only for those who talk the language of Love. Again, is the sentimentalist really doing any good, or is he actually doing harm by not thinking clearly and definitely?"

Mrs. Tilly writes on this point: "I make no claims to great knowledge. I have no statistics of crime. But my estimate is that at least 50% of the crimes of violence here in our country are committed by *thinking*. By intellectuals using the sensitive bodies of others to do their dirty work. Will Mr. Morrish give us some 'selective thinking' on psychism and crime and tell us who is the criminal?"

A Student writes: "Regarding the author's reference to 'teach the criminal by love', there is an interesting reference in the Mahatma Letters on page 401, 'Western Theosophists should learn and remember, especially those of them who would be our followers—that in our Brotherhood, all personalities sink into one idea—abstract right and absolute practical justice for all. And that, though we may *not say* with the Christians, "return good for evil"—we repeat with Confucius, "return good for good; for evil, JUSTICE." The 'lost soul' is generally not the one who shoots right and left for money or kills in a rage (mental obscuration), but the cold calculating, cynical, sedistic animal psyche, often concentrated by the dark forces for the purposes of destruction as we recently witnessed to our horror in Europe.

"H. P. B. speaks in the S.D. of 'thoroughly wicked and depraved men, but yet as highly intellectual and acutely *spiritual* for evil, as those who are *spiritual* for good." It is further stated: "Thus we find two kinds of soulless beings on earth; those who have lost their Higher Ego in the present incarnation, and those who are born soulless . . . The former are candidates for Avitchi; the latter are Mr. Hydes, whether *in or out* of human bodies . . . Further, Good and evil are relative and are intensified or lessened according to the conditions by which a man is surrounded . . . Crimes committed in Avidya, or ignor-

ance, involve physical but not moral responsibilities or Karma. Take, for example, the case of idiots, children, savages and people who know no better. But the case of each who is pledged to the Higher Self is quite another matter'."

"It is up to all theosophically thinking and practicing men and women to help suffering humanity as a whole. The criminal is part of this."

Mr. Soper comments that "It would be interesting to know by what process of 'hard thinking' Mr. Morrish reconciles this with the teaching of the Lord Buddha (than whom there is no greater available authority) that 'hatred ceaseth not by hatred; hatred ceaseth only by love'." Mr. Soper points out that Hitler and his followers used similar arguments to justify their barbaric acts, namely *they* were the evolved, the real aristocracy; the masses were the unevolved. "We should always beware of the old Greek sin of *hubris*—pride. The Greeks well knew that the Powers that Be visited a quick and terrible retribution on those mortals who arrogantly assumed to themselves the powers of the Gods, as we have seen in our own times."

Mr. Morrish, however did not advocate 'hatred' of criminals. He asked which would produce the greater good for them—'as near utter justice as you can' or 'over sentimentality in the treatment of them.' Perhaps both the author and the critics should define their terms. What does each mean by 'a criminal' and what by 'a primitive ego'?

In our attitude towards others, Compassion is an opener of doors which are forever secreted from mind acting by its own light alone. Dr. Albert Schweitzer won the primitive negroes of equatorial Africa by his ever-flowing selfless heart; his mind many times despaired, but compassion would not secede. K.H.

write: "Humanity in the mass has a paramount claim upon me . . . If it be a dream, it is at least a noble one for mankind; and it is the aspiration of the *true adept*."

CORRESPONDENCE

The Theosophical Society,
Adyar, Madras, 20,
27th October, 1949.

Dear Colonel Thomson:—

The Recording Secretary, Miss Helen Zahara, has shown me the resolution passed by the General Executive of the Society in Canada concerning the custody of the Pictures of the Masters. As the proposal to transfer them to the Esoteric School came from me, it is perhaps as well that I should put before you my considerations.

The Pictures were formerly, in the President-Founder's time, kept in an annex to the Adyar Library and were open to inspection by all interested. But he himself realized later that many who came to view them did so mainly out of curiosity, the members of the Society not being all of them believers in the existence of the Masters in general or in the particular Beings who were so much concerned with the Society in its early days. In the view of those who regarded these Pictures as sacred, the exposure of them in a semi-public manner, surrounded by thoughts of a mixed and desultory character, was not treating the Pictures and their living Originals with due reverence; and the remarks passed in ensuing conversations were often calculated to offend and shock their sensitive feelings.

Further, the prominent and public association of these Pictures with the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society fostered the idea in the public mind that the Society was committed to a belief in the existence of "Masters" (a term on which the public put its own interpretation, often crude and author-

itarian) and of particular Persons supposed by Theosophists to be their Masters. Among the members of the Society itself, this atmosphere has tended in the past to keep alive a cult of the Masters, which one of the Masters strongly deprecated as detrimental to its growth. The President-Founder saw the need to seclude the Pictures, *as H. P. B. had done previously*, withdrawing them as a cause of constant excitement and comment. He stated in his Diary that his Master ordered him to do so, and he had the Pictures placed in a special Shrine Room built over the Library in 1905 as part of the Esoteric School rooms with funds donated by the Esoteric School members.

It is not as though we place in the Hall, or whatever the location may be, two very beautiful and striking pictures, purporting to be representations associated by all and by all tradition with high and holy sentiments. There is reason to apprehend that the atmosphere of the time when the Pictures were openly exhibited may come into life again, if we give them prominence and thrust on the minds of members by implication a belief which is not obligatory and which to be of any value must spring up naturally with understanding.

I am myself a member of the Esoteric School, whose members are members of the Society who accept the Masters and surround that idea with the deepest reverence. But it is in no acquisitive or superior spirit that I have made the proposal in question; but in order to shield the Pictures from the contingency of being used in a manner which does not show due reverence, and to keep the Society free from an attitude of blind belief and superstition on the part of some, inevitably challenged by others critically and iconoclastically minded.

The one legitimate and valid argument in favour of the Society keeping

the Pictures is their priceless value as historical mementoes, associated with the early days and our two Founders. We have in this matter, as in others, to balance considerations. I personally have no objection to letting the present arrangement continue, namely that the Society should remain the owner of the Pictures, and let the Esoteric School have the custody, so long as the Esoteric School is acceptable to the Society as a proper custodian. It is considerations such as the above, which have prompted successive Presidents of the Society to acquiesce in the original transfer to the Esoteric School's Shrine Room *now some forty years ago*.

If the resolution of the General Executive in Canada is to be published in *The Canadian Theosophist*, I would request you to publish also my views as stated above. I would be very glad if the members of the Canadian Executive will carefully weigh the considerations I have set forth, in which, I can assure you, there is no feeling of superiority or inferiority turning on the acceptance or non-acceptance of the idea of the Masters.

With cordial greetings to yourself,
Fraternally,

N. Sri Ram.

My warm and fraternal greetings to the Canadian Section members, whenever you may have an opportunity to convey them. I have the pleasantest recollections of my visits to Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.

The above letter was received by the General Secretary at press time and we are glad to be able to publish it this month.

Our readers will recognize that while the letter gives Mr. Sri Ram's personal reasons for believing that the pictures should remain with the Esoteric School it does not give the reasons for the proposal to transfer the actual title to the

School, which action would deprive the Theosophical Society of all future control over them. We do not wish to be unduly censorious but we do consider unfortunate at least, the first two sentences of the paragraph beginning "The one legitimate and valid argument". The Society does not have to argue with the Esoteric School as to whether or not the Society shall retain the ownership of its own property. The Esoteric School has no present claim 'legitimate and valid' or otherwise to the pictures.

Mr. Sri Ram stated that he has no objection to letting the present arrangements continue during the pleasure of the Society and doubtless he will, therefore, arrange to have this objectionable motion withdrawn. This might be the best way out of the situation which has arisen.

Differences of opinion such as this do not affect the fundamental fraternity of all Theosophical students. On behalf of the General Secretary we thank Mr. Sri Ram for his warm and fraternal greetings to the members in Canada and reciprocate in sending best wishes to him.

"THE OPEN MIND"

Doubtless many of our readers have seen the important article on Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer by Mr. Lincoln Barnett which appeared in *Life*, Oct. 10th, 1949. It has much that is of interest to Theosophists.

Dr. Oppenheimer, who is now Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton, and who is recognized as one of the foremost theoretical physicists in the world, has, as the author of the article points out, "a Davincian range of interests and knowledge, encompassing the arts and humanities, the social sciences, current affairs and oriental philosophy." He is a student of Sanskrit and when he was living in California, was a member of a

group which met every Thursday evening to read and discuss the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita. His interest in Hindu philosophy is a very real one and the theory of Maya as presented in the Vedanta, interested him profoundly because of its similarity to the philosophical concepts and implications arising out of western science's researches into the ultimate nature of matter.

His attitude of mind is well worth observing. From Neils Bohr, a Nobel prize physicist and a friend of many years, Dr. Oppenheimer absorbed the idea of the principle of 'complimentarity' which involves recognizing that apparent contradictions between two concepts may not necessarily nullify each other but may be complementary. The author points out that this principle of complementarity is the key to the open mind that every true scientist should have and remarks on the significance of the fact that Dr. Oppenheimer applies this principle in human relations, the social sciences and other areas of thought.

In a recently published speech, 'The Open Mind' Dr. Oppenheimer wrote: "The problem of doing justice to the implicit, the imponderable and the unknown is always with us in science, it is with us in the most trivial of personal affairs, and is one of the great problems of all forms of art." A sensitivity to 'the implicit, the imponderable and the unknown' is as the author of the article remarked, the essence of the open mind.

The words from the above mentioned speech should be pondered over by Theosophical students. One of the criticisms of much of the later literature of the Society is that many of our writers are under the impression that they have unveiled most of the mysteries of being. They write voluminously about reincarnation, karma, chelaship, initiations, rings, rounds and races, the inner planes, but so often superficialities are

presented as final truths. There is an insensitivity to 'the implicit, the imponderable and the unknown'; there is not the humility of the open mind which is constantly aware of presence of these factors. Whitman wrote: "To begin with, take warning—I am probably far different from what you suppose; . . . Do you see no further than this facade—this smooth and tolerant manner of me? Have you no thought, O dreamer, that it may be all maya, illusion?"

Dr. Oppenheimer had much to do with the development of the atom bomb. Unlike some of his fellow scientists he has a sense of guilt, of sin, in its creation. Expediency was the foremost reason for the bomb, and later there was the often-exploded excuse that the very nature of this terrible weapon was such that it would tend to preserve peace rather than encourage wars. Nobel and Santos Dumont suffered from the same illusion concerning dynamite and airplanes. Dr. Oppenheimer was of course, not responsible for the decision to employ the bombs on Japan after the war had been virtually won and Japan had made a bid for peace through the intermediacy of Russia, who at that time was not at war with Japan.

SELF-SACRIFICE

Self-sacrifice is defined in the Key to Theosophy as the giving to others more than to oneself; subject to the stipulation that it must be performed with discrimination, and with a proper regard for justice.

These concepts—self-sacrifice, discrimination, justice—are impersonal and abstract. They are the formula for the virtue of altruism, which is an integral part of self-development, and the antidote for the evil of selfishness.

Following the Platonic method of reasoning from universals to particulars, we will consider the subject in a practical way, as it relates to the Theo-

osophical Society as a whole, or to any person.

At the present time, the fundamental object of the Society is to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of humanity, without any distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour; and to sow germs of altruism in the hearts of men, which may in time sprout, and under more propitious circumstances lead to a healthy reform, conducive of more happiness to the masses than has been enjoyed hitherto.

The original Founders, all now deceased, perceiving the futility of a doctrine of separateness which is bound to culminate in an age of selfishness and materialism; and seeing, on the other hand, something very noble, and exalted and true in the philosophy and teachings of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion, gave to the Theosophical Movement all their strength of body and intellect, including their worldly prosperity and success. They sacrificed their personal comforts, their social positions, their good names—even their honour, to receive in return incessant and ceaseless obloquy, relentless persecution, untiring slander, constant ingratitude, and misunderstanding of their best efforts—when, by simply dropping their work, they could have found themselves released from every responsibility. Thanks to those few, the coming generations will find the path to peace a little less thorny, and the way a little widened. Thus all their suffering will have produced good results, and their self-sacrifice will not have been in vain.

But we, of a later generation, are apt to neglect the making of a retrospective review of those early days and struggles, with the result that we adopt a complacent attitude, especially towards the high endeavours which the Founders had in view. We forget that the Movement is yet young, and that to hold and maintain the position achieved

in the first fifteen years, we are required to give of ourselves unstintingly in service, and of our means according to our capacities.

The Master K.H., who took a leading part in making it possible for the Theosophical Teachings to be given out to the Western Hemisphere, stated in one of his letters to a pupil that "Selfishness and the want of Self-sacrifice are the greatest impediments on the path of Adeptship." He never spoke flippantly at any time, and always with a due regard for the relationship of Cause and Effect. If these vices were impediments on the path of Adeptship, we can be certain they will hamper the effective purposes of the Society also, and require the constant vigilance of the individual member to prevent their infiltration.

Perhaps this is the reason that there is not to be found today in any of the Sections the same virility which existed in the early days. Outside considerations are allowed to thwart and negative the inner impulse of Buddhi to put our very best efforts into the work, and as a result, George is left to carry the whole load.

However, in the matter of Self-sacrifice, there must be judgment used and discrimination exercised, else our sacrifice will carry us to impossible extremes. Also, there will need to be found a sense of justice, so that the burdens may be evenly distributed among the members, and the rewards, if any, shared by all alike.

With a due regard to these three factors, any Society motivated by them will continue to grow and expand; and if its purpose is high, it will also be a benefactor to all mankind.

E. P. W.

"Put, without delay, your good intentions into practice, never leaving a single one to remain only an intention."

H.P.B. in *Practical Occultism*.

CANADIAN LODGES

CALGARY LODGE:

President, E. H. Lloyd Knechtel; Secretary, Mrs. Lilian Glover, 413, 10th Ave. N.W., Calgary, Alta. Meetings at 231 Examiner Bldg.

EDMONTON LODGE:

President, Mr. Emory P. Wood; Secretary, Mrs. N. Dalzell, Suite 1, Maclean Block, Edmonton, Alta.

HAMILTON LODGE:

President, Mrs. E. M. Mathers; Secretary, Miss Mabel Carr, 108 Balsam Avenue South, Hamilton, Ont.

KITCHENER LODGE:

President, John Oberlerchener; Secretary, Alexander Watt, P.O. Box 74.

MONTREAL LODGE:

President, Miss Helena Burke; Secretary, Mrs. H. Lorimer, 376 Redfern Ave., Apt 25, Westmount, P.Q., Lodge Rooms, 1501 St Catherine Street West, Montreal.

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ST. THOMAS LODGE:

President, Benj. T. Garside, Secretary, Mrs. Hazel B. Garside, General Delivery, St. Thomas, Ont.

TORONTO LODGE:

President, Miss M. Hindsley; Secretary, Mrs. G. I. Kinman; Lodge rooms, 52 Isabella Street, Toronto, Ont.

TORONTO WEST END LODGE:

President, Mrs. A. Carmichael; Secretary, Mrs. E. L. Goss, 20 Strathearn Boulevard, Toronto, 12, Ont.

VANCOUVER LODGE:

President, Mrs. Buchanan; Secretary, M. D. Buchanan, 4621 W. 6th Avenue. The Lodge rooms are at 151½ Hastings St. West.

VULCAN LODGE:

President, Guy Denbigh, Vulcan, Alta.

ORPHEUS LODGE, VANCOUVER:

President, R. H. Hedley; Lodge Room: 505 Ford Building, 193 East Hastings Street, Vancouver.

VICTORIA LODGE:

President, Mrs. Minnie S. Carr; Secretary, George Sydney Carr, 33 Government St., Victoria, B. C.

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