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Christmas

To all those who through their study of comparative religion have come to appreciate that each religion is but one facet of the central truth underlying all religions, the Christmas season is one of special interest.

In our day and age, Christmas is associated with the Christian story of the birth of the Christ-child in the manger of a small inn near Bethlehem. That child was the son of God and Mary was his physical mother. He was the God-Man, the one in whom God and man were blended. To the simple, yet profoundly symbolic, story as it appears in the Gospels, many legends have been added and along with the religious tradition, many other secular traditions and customs drawn from various sources are now considered to be an essential part of the Christmas legend. Holly and mistletoe came from the Druids of ancient Britain, Santa Claus from the Teutons, the candlelit Christmas trees from the Norse.

It is important to remember that these other traditions and customs did not arise as the result of the spreading of Christianity—they were in existence long before the year 1 A.D. and were merely carried forward and incorporated in the growing body of legend and in

the popular methods of celebrating a very ancient rite. Even the religious significance of Christmas is not 'modern'; it ante-dates Christianity by many thousands of years.

Long before there were printed calendars with Dec. 25th marked in clear red figures, the race of men watched the great clock of the heavens and celebrated a religious festival at the time of the winter solstice. At that time of the year, the Northern races rejoiced that the sun had ceased to decline and was reborn. The long period of ever-shortening days had ended; the sun had turned in its course and soon would come again the season of rich, full, sunlit days.

This period was always marked by special ceremonies. To some persons it was a purely physical event; to others the phenomenon was symbolic of a deeper, spiritual truth—"From the new sun cometh a new Light". Dr. J. G. Frazer in the *Golden Bough* says, "If we may trust the evidence of an obscure scholiast the Greeks used to celebrate the birth of the luminary by a midnight service, coming out of the inner shrines and crying, 'the Virgin has brought forth, the Light is waxing'."

That symbolic Light was the old returning light of spiritual wisdom

brought to mankind by the great messengers, the Saviours. The birth date of the Saviours was always in that dark season of the year in which the physical sun turns and is reborn. Mithra was reported to have been born on the 25th of December; Osiris was said to have been born on the 361st day of the year and Horus on the 362nd. Around each of the Saviours similar legends grew up. They were born of the Virgin; they were sons of the God; their coming was foretold; bright stars gathered at their birth; they were born in lowly places, a stable, a cave or in an underground chamber; sages and wise men sought and worshipped them. The many stories agree remarkably and the similarity of these with the Christian has been an unpleasant fact which many have refused to face.

In the mystical sense, Christmas, the birth of the Christ Child, the God-Man, occurs when deep in the cave of his heart, a man first becomes aware of his true nature and turns back to his Divine Self. It signifies rising to a new level of consciousness; it is literally being born of the Spirit, the inner God; awakening out of the little dream of separateness and beginning to tread the path that leads to freedom and full realization of the vaster consciousness of the Divine.

All legends, traditions and customs relating to the physical sun and to the Sun-Gods are but symbols of that inner experience, the awakening to the Self. By whatever name it is called, it is that which happens in the heart of a man or woman when the dark cycle ends and Light, the Inner Light, is born.

ON MYTHS, ANCIENT AND MODERN

BY W. F. SUTHERLAND

I.

Much depends on the point of view, and in this respect we have been sadly conditioned by prevailing attitudes towards the past. For the most part we conclude that religions other than our own were cheap tawdry affairs, born in the morning hours of the human race from minds half-evolved, at a time when man had hardly separated himself off from nature in thought, and when he was wont to attribute to the external world his own attributes, qualities and powers, with something of the supernatural tossed in for good measure. Whatever we may think of our own religion, and we have not been inclined to examine it too closely, others at least were the personifications of wind and wave, of sun and moon and stars, of seed-time and harvest, or the omnipresent fecundity of nature. It was a fecundity which the earlier peoples joy-

ously celebrated and of which they were disgracefully unashamed. This, of course, was notoriously the case with the Greeks and even the children of Israel sacrificed upon the mountain-tops; burned incense upon the hills and in the groves; while in the forthright Anglo-Saxon of the Authorized Version we read that all the while they went "a-whoring after Baalam".

The custom of offering up one's virginity to the honour and profit of the God of the moment has largely gone out of fashion, but even so, the cult is still widely celebrated in song and verse and story, in the printed word, on stage and screen and on the air, by old and young, with all the refinements and sophistications our mechanical civilization provides. Judging by the current television and radio versions, however, there is now much of frustration and little of

abandoned, carefree, enjoyment.

As if this were not enough, we too have our myths, our culture heroes, and our orgiastic celebrations, with all the older trappings in abundance. Our mythologies are just as cruel, our actions just as sadistic, and both are quite as full of emotional content. These points need no elaboration.

"Humanity still bears the scars of the first of these mythologies, that of supernaturalism which devastated Europe and the World no farther back than the seventeenth century. The Thirty-Years' War set back civilization in some parts of Europe for a century. Today (1939) a second madness grips them, Nationalism, a still more degraded myth, and men tear one another to pieces in order that a deity, the Nation, may prevail over other similar deities whose very meaning the contestants cannot define clearly. Meanwhile, a third madness causes them to starve in the midst of plenty and to do many other no less insane things. Mythologies cluster around the relations between the sexes and no doubt there are other systems of delusion as well."¹

It is quite important to note that our own myths are thoroughly objective in essence, form and substance. We set up these myths quite in ignorance for the most part that they are myths and we attribute to them the qualities of objective absolutes, as when we consider the state or nation, socialism, communism or for that matter the free enterprise system. The modern family and our other forms of social and political and economic organisms are likewise based on myth systems. And by casuistical reasoning we succeed in giving these myth-systems an outward form and substance, whereby they come to have a very real existence. They thus are quite objective and impersonal when rationalized, and perhaps for this very reason, they are all the more terrible in their

strength for good and evil.

Furthermore, as long as we agree to abide by our own particular sets of rules, they seem logical enough; each such set seems to have its own internal consistencies and its laws of dynamic behaviour when superimposed on the world without, and when studied in this world as its setting. Indeed, it is possible in some fields to set up equational systems similar to those to be met with in the physical sciences for the descriptions of behaviours. Perhaps it might better be said that we have the knack of making our myths conform to a degree to natural law, at any rate everything seems to be quite in conformity with the historical process—even starvation in the midst of plenty!

It is only when we penetrate beneath the surface and question the basic concepts underlying our beliefs, when we set up moral or other conflicting standards that logical contradictions appear and rationality takes flight. Here, once we deny validity, the whole vast structure, like the cloud-capped towers of Prospero's vision dissolves into thin air leaving not a rack behind.

II.

Quite significantly the Magian myth-patterns of old times would appear to have been of a nature exactly the reverse. They certainly betrayed their irrationalities quite openly, in external form, while within, if we are to accept the views of most of the ancients and some few moderns, these irrationalities disappear and more or less logical explanations present themselves.

The part played by the myth in the ancient literatures is indicative of the emphasis placed on the study of man himself somewhat to the neglect of his environment. For the most part, and certainly before the days of the Greeks, where this environment was given much consideration it was mainly for the purpose of studying man himself the better.

We, on the contrary, are not so much interested in man. We are more concerned with what goes on outside him. This is why we have gained so much control over the outside world, and possibly also, why we have gained so little over ourselves. The rewards which the Magician gained for himself were the fruits of his own perfecting. Today our scientists seldom study man himself, and when they do, it is always the other fellow, never the scientist himself. Our wars, our social evils, and the inequities of our economic structure all attest to this deficient side of our culture; not that the ancients on the whole were any better. In view, however, of our progress in other directions it might be thought that we could have done better with ourselves.

But psychology is the newest of our sciences, the one last to break away from the fold of philosophy and possibly the one least advanced. If many students be right, it was the earliest of the ancient and eastern sciences and certainly the one most important. The whole of the ancient world, say ante 500 B.C., was under the influence of similar ideas.

Once we begin to appreciate this, we begin to see that the Magian era was concerned mainly with what we might call the true "subjective" as against our present emphasis on the "objective"; and we see also that in reality there are only two main pathways along which we may travel, the inner and the outer.

That this outward absurdity and irrationality, so evident in the ancient myth, was perfectly well-known and appreciated by the ancients themselves ought to be quite obvious. Plato himself was disturbed by the unworthy actions of the Gods and Heroes of his native Greece, and in the second book of the Republic he urged that the fables concerning such should "not be so plainly told to the unwise and the young, but ought rather to

be concealed", though if there were a necessity to tell them, "they should be heard in secrecy, by as few as possible; after they had sacrificed not a hog; but some great and wonderful sacrifice that thus the fewest possible might chance to hear them".

These fables were indeed "truly hurtful".

For them Plato suggested the substitution of myths after the modern fashion. The people would be told that their youth was a dream, and that the education and training they had received from their guardians was in appearance only; in reality during that time they were being fashioned in the womb of the earth and their arms and appurtenances with them. So their country being thus their mother and their nurse, they would be bound to advise for her good and to defend her, and her citizens were to be regarded as children of the earth and their own brothers, moreover, they were also to be told that God had framed them differently: some of gold, some of silver, and some of brass and iron, and had so arranged that these species would generally be preserved in their children. To those of gold was given to rule; to those of silver, to be auxiliaries, to the others, to be husbandmen and craftsmen. But since all came from the one stock, it would occasionally happen that a golden parent might have a silver son, or a silver parent a golden son, and the like. On these occasions, a transportation of rank should be observed for had not an oracle said that "when a man of brass or iron guards the state it will be destroyed"?

Such was Plato's "audacious fiction" for which he has been most roundly censured by those who conveniently failing to discern the identities between his and our own "audacious fictions" chide him for his blatant cynicism. They forget too that Plato went on to say that "if we are at all to persuade them that

at no time should one citizen hate another, and that it is unholy; such things as these are rather to be said to them immediately when they are children by the old men and women, and by those well advanced in life".²

These matters are of no great importance for significances lie elsewhere—in the casual concession that Socrates makes to those willing to undertake "some great and wonderful sacrifice". Here, as Proclus says in his *Apology* for the fables of Homer, Socrates is far from despising this kind of fable for he evinces that the hearing of them is co-ordinated with the most holy initiations and the most subtle mysteries. For to assert that such fables ought to be used in secret with a sacrifice the *greatest* and *most perfect*, manifests that the contemplation of them is mystic, and that they elevate the souls of the hearers to sublime speculations.

"It follows, therefore, according to Socrates himself, that there is a two-fold species of fable, one of which is adapted to the instruction of youth, but the other is mystic; one is preparatory to moral virtue, but the other imparts a conjunction with a divine nature; one is capable of benefiting the many, the other is adapted to the few; the one is common and known to most men, but the other is recondite and unadapted to those who do not hasten to become perfectly established in a divine nature; and the one is co-ordinate with juvenile habits, but the other scarcely unfolds itself with sacrifices and mystic tradition".³

III.

C. G. Jung is one of the moderns who view the ancient myth with something like sympathy and understanding, and we can go some little way with him. As might be expected, he gives to the myth a psychological explanation and believes that ancient myth-patterns were simply projections of the human psyche, whim-

sical and utterly irrational as it is; projections which became highly conventionalized and which were given a specious air of reality through their personification in the innumerable Gods, Heroes and lesser hosts of the Pantheons of the times. According to him the ancient myth-patterns and the religions that accompanied them, came from the generalized unconscious mind common to the whole race of mankind and equally accessible to the ignorant savage as to the ancient Greek. In discussing Spittler's Prometheus and Epithemus he says that

"While the subject; i.e., Prometheus, is essentially human; the soul is of quite another character. It is dæmonic, because the inner object, namely the supra-personal collective unconscious to which it is attached as the function of revelation, gleams through it. The unconscious, regarded as the historical background of the psyche, contains in concentrated form the entire succession of engrams (Imprints), which from time immemorial have determined the psychic structure as it now exists. These engrams may be regarded as function-graces which typify, on the average, the most frequent and intensely used functions of the human soul. These function-engrams present themselves in the form of mythological themes and images, appearing often in identical form and always with striking similarity among all races! they can also be easily verified in the unconscious material of Modern Man".⁴

"There is a natural inclination to confine astral or lunar myths to these seasonal and vegetational analogies. In so doing, however, we entirely lose sight of the fact that a myth, like everything psychic, cannot be solely conditioned by outward events. The psychic product brings with it its own inner conditions, so that one might assert with equal right that the myth is purely psychological

and merely uses the facts of meteorological or astronomical processes as material for expression. The arbitrariness and absurdity of so many of the primitive mythical assertions makes the latter version more frequently applicable than any other."⁵

IV.

Cornford expresses much the same point of view in his study of the development of Greek thought, *From Religion to Philosophy*⁶ though as the title might indicate, he inclines more to the consideration of the rational content than to the psychic. He believes that the advent of the spirit of rational enquiry with the Greeks did not mean a sudden and a complete breach with older ways of thought; but, on the contrary, that there was a real continuity between the earliest rationalistic speculation and the religious representation that lay behind it. The modes of thought that attain to clear definition and explicit statement in philosophy were already implicit in the unreasoned intuitions of mythology. He believes also that the Greeks themselves had early divined the two impulses which had been at work in shaping their systems of thought, and he remarks that Diogenes Laertius (ca. 225 A.D.) recognized this division by grouping the philosophers into two successions, Ionian and Italiote, headed respectively by Anaximander and Pythagoras. The Ionian school he calls the 'scientific', the Italian the 'mystic', and goes on to say that the two diverged more and more widely toward opposite conclusions. In passing, he also remarks that these two impulses are still operative in our own speculations, for the simple reason that they correspond to two permanent needs of human nature and characterize two familiar types of human temperament. (We shall see more of these two types.)

Continuing, Cornford says that the
(Continued on Page 158.)

NOTES AND COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY

I regret to report the death of Mrs. W. W. Leisenring, an internationally known worker in the Theosophical Cause. Mrs. Leisenring died suddenly of a heart attack in her home in Saxmundham, Suffolk, England, on July 19 of this year, but word of her passing was received only recently.

Mrs. Leisenring, nee Winifred Wilson, was a Canadian, born in Ontario on December 1, 1873. She attended Victoria College, University of Toronto, and was graduated in 1898. She became a member of Toronto Lodge in the early days and spoke at its meetings when these were held on Gerrard Street between 1907 and 1910. Later she went to England, married there, and became an active worker in the Society. At one time she edited *The Path*, and later, *World Power*. A close friend of the late A. E. S. Smythe, Mrs. Leisenring contributed many articles to *The Canadian Theosophist* between 1930 and 1933. She was a staunch upholder of Madame Blavatsky as agent of the Masters, and her articles and letters revealed her keen mind and comprehensive grasp of the teachings. Like so many students of *The Secret Doctrine*, Neo-Theosophy had no appeal for her. She dropped her membership in the Society and became active in the work of the Blavatsky Association and was on the Council of that organization.

Mrs. Leisenring was one who during her long lifetime served the old Cause with devotion, courage and wisdom. Other lives will bring all such workers back again to labour anew for human enlightenment.

To an old comrade of the way we say farewell, and to her daughter, Alice, and to other members of the family we extend our sincere sympathy.

Professor Gokhale of Poona, India has sent me a fine coloured print of Mahatma Ghandi and inscribed thereon is "Presented in appreciation of the work of the Theosophical Society in Canada in the cause of spreading the Spirit of Theosophy, Brotherhood and Peace". In thanking him I wrote in part ". . . his (Ghandi's) spirit and observance of non-violence, love and truth was indeed a lesson to humanity and one that will have repercussions throughout the world; let us hope that the belligerence and unhappiness so rampant to-day will be assuaged by the lessons he taught and the life he lived", and closed by expressing the thanks of the Canadian Society for Professor Gokhale's appreciation of our efforts on behalf of Theosophy.

* * * *

If any recently joined member, that is within the last year or two has not received his diploma through change of address, or for any other cause, please let me know by writing me at my official address.

* * * *

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 catalogue and particulars write to the Travelling Librarian, 52 Isabella St., Toronto.

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What better gift for Xmas could you give anyone interested in our teachings than a bound volume of The Canadian Theosophist? These bound volumes go back to its inception, some thirty odd years ago up to 1948, and are a veritable mine of information of an intensely interesting nature. They may be bought

for \$2.50 per volume, post free. Apply to the General Secretary. And yet another idea:—Send me a year's subscription (\$2) with your friend's address and I will do the rest.

* * * *

Christmas comes but once a year and the natural corollary is that when it comes it brings Good Cheer. If that is so then let us hope that there will be a lessening in the general international turmoil that is deafening our ears and making a veritable witches cauldron in which all of us are embroiled. My fervent wish is that all men follow the old teaching "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you", if that admirable precept were borne out then indeed would joy and happiness reign on this old planet of ours. To all Theosophists and others wherever they be may this Christ Mass be a time of Peace and Happiness, and may the New Year be one of Well-Being to you all.

E. L. T.

ADVENT MOCKERY

The voice of the animals:—

They joy for Him at Christmas born.
But we must mourn, O we must mourn!

On us who stood by lowly stall,
Cruel hands with knife and bolt will fall!

Who saw the Babe and Mother sweet,
They'll drive with blows along the street!

O Jesus, gentle, meek and mild,
Our eyes with fear and hate are wild!

And Peace on earth, good will to men,
Means war on us, their kith and kin!

O King of mercy, come to earth,
Our blood will flow to mark Thy birth!

Harold Tyrwhitt.

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OFFICERS OF THE T. S. IN CANADA

GENERAL EXECUTIVE

Dudley W. Barr, 18 Rowanwood Ave., Toronto, Ont.
Charles M. Hale, Box 158, New Liskeard, Ont.
Miss M. Hindsley, 52 Isabella St., Toronto, Ont.
George I. Kinman, 46 Rawlinson Ave., Toronto, Ont.
Peter Sinclair, 4941 Wellington St., Verdun, Quebec.
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Emory P. Wood 9360 — 86th St., Edmonton, Alta.

GENERAL SECRETARY

Lt.-Col. E. L. Thomson, D.S.O., 52 Isabella St., Toronto, Ont.
To whom all payments should be made, and all official communications addressed.

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**INTERNATIONAL VEGETARIAN
CONFERENCE**

An International Vegetarian Conference, attended by two hundred persons of twenty nationalities, met in Sweden during the first week in August, 1953. There was no delegate from Canada, but greetings were given at the official opening sessions, and a mimeographed report of the activities of the Canadian Vegetarian Union, made out by Eva Budd and Ruth Playle of Toronto, was handed to everyone present.

The meetings were held in Sigunta, an ancient town, the fore-runner of Stockholm, and twenty miles north of that city. The building and grounds of a "Humanitarian College" were admirably suited to the needs of the congress; dormitories scattered up and down a

wooded hillside, two halls for meetings, and a large dining room in which most deliciously prepared vegetarian meals, with plenty of greens and salads, were served.

On the first evening, Dr. Frank Wokes of Great Britain spoke on "How Much Animal Food Do We Need?", and his conclusion was that, "no flesh food and little animal products" were necessary for strong healthy bodies."

On the second day, O. E. Rasmussen, a Danish horticultural adviser, spoke on "Healthy Soil, Healthy Products and Dangerous supplements". He stressed biodynamic methods and the avoidance of commercial fertilizers. There was considerable pro and con argument from the floor. Some considered it an abandonment of scientific practices and a return to medieval times, but the majority of those at the meeting seemed to be against the use of poisonous sprays and commercial fertilizers, and in favour of organic gardening.

Linked closely to this talk was one given by Scott Nearing, U.S.A., who spoke on "Food Production Without Animal Residues". He explained in practical detail how a consistent vegetarian could avoid animal manures and commercial products and raise a healthy abundant crop of vital vegetables and fruit. He described the composting methods he uses in Maine, and the heavy hay and seaweed mulch spread over the garden, which eliminates weeds, attracts and feeds earthworms, and keeps the ground moist and friable.

Peter Freeman, Member of Parliament for Wales, devoted an evening to the food shortage in the world under a flesh-eating economy, and showed in round numbers how universal vegetarianism could solve the problem by freeing thousands of acres which are now used for grazing, and turning them into primary food producing areas. He

spoke of the wastefulness of feeding animals and then eating them. Food at first hand was his motto.

The discussion of the economy, rationale and practise of food raising was a new element in vegetarian circles and was welcomed by all, whether gardeners or not.

There were talks on other aspects of vegetarianism; one by Walter Sommer of Germany on "The Eternal Laws of Man's Food"; another by F. A. Bode of India on "Vegetarianism in Ancient Cultures". One afternoon was given over entirely to women speakers. Those participating were Frau Ecker-Lauer of Germany; Mrs. Muriel Drake and Mrs. Elsie Shrigley, both vegans from Britain; Mrs. Ferne Lasser of Chicago and Mrs. Helen Nearing of Maine, U.S.A., Mrs. Bode of India and Mrs. Stuge of Sweden.

Dr. Kirstin Wolfi of Humlebaek, Denmark, read a paper on the efficacy of a raw food diet in cases of cancer and other serious diseases. She was a living example herself of such a cure, and though slight and white-haired, radiated strength and assurance, while her blue eyes snapped with vigour.

On the last day of the Conference, Dr. Ragnar Berg of Sweden gave an important address at a meeting held in the Parliament Building in Stockholm. He stressed the importance of fruits and vegetables in the diet and said that they alone were sufficient to sustain life and health, quite aside from the moral reasons for vegetarianism.

Through the whole convention were interspersed closed meetings for delegates and executive committees. Officers for the ensuing two years were elected: W. A. Sibley of Great Britain, the past President, stepped down in favour of Mrs. C. A. Gasque of U.S.A., who became President of the International Vegetarian Union. Plans were laid for new efforts to revivify and org-

anize societies in many countries. Paris was designated as the convention city for 1955.

Besides the work and meetings of the conference, excursions were taken to the nearby castle of Skokloster, and to Uppsala, an ancient and modern university town. The cordiality and friendliness of the Swedish hosts, the camaraderie between the people, plus the beauties of Sigunta and of Stockholm, made it a convention long to be remembered by every participant from John Maxwell of the U.S.A., aged 91, down to Richard Wokes of Great Britain, aged 7, and little Ida Nielsen of Denmark, age 1½, all three of whom added greatly to the life and gaiety of the congress.

Helen Nearing.
(Mrs. Scott Nearing).

CORRESPONDENCE

Box 65,
Berkeley, California,
Nov. 12, 1953.

Mr. Dudley W. Barr, Editor,
The Canadian Theosophist.

Dear Mr. Barr:

We note with much interest Mr. Iversen Harris' article on "Centrifugal and Centripetal Forces" in your last number. We much appreciate the inclusion of some of our own material, and Mr. Harris is to be congratulated on using a very apt term for the situation. At the same time, his treatment raises some very complex questions. We would appreciate your printing a boiled-down summary thereof as follows:

1. The treatment tends somewhat to obscure the fact that the "centrifugal" force based on "self-induced and self-devised efforts" is the essence of Theosophy itself, and that at the most, credit should be given to figures furthering it, following the work of the Founders, only for adherence to or return to the real spirit of Theosophy—not for a new

inspiration. The wording of the article tends to the effect that "centrifugalism"—the cause to which our own publication is devoted—could be considered the later idea or effort of prominent individuals.

2. Both Mr. Harris and Mr. de Zirkoff, mentioned by him, personally profess loyalty to Katherine Tingley and to Dr. de Purucker. The former we hold to be the most thorough exponent of the "centripetal" force ever known in the Movement; the latter maintained its essential core in spite of the concessions mentioned.

3. Personal loyalty to leaders following this principle appears to us incompatible with "centrifugalism" as we understand it, leading to the surmise that in Mr. Harris's mind the centrifugal or non-authoritarian position may not be a basic Theosophical principle, but a matter of adapting tactics to new conditions, with an authoritarian core as the enduring modulus.

4. The fact that both Messrs. Harris and de Zirkoff loyally supported the extremely authoritarian Tingley succession, until the advent of Mr. James Long, through which they are exiles from that order, leads to a possibility that it is only centripetalism or authoritarianism *in some hands* that they object to.

5. This in turn leads to the query as to whether, with such a basic authoritarian outlook, their influence, albeit unintentional, in the "centrifugal" sphere might not be toward turning that movement once more by degrees into an authoritarian direction; a centripetalism perhaps with some new hub; but the same principle.

6. We cannot but feel that to begin "giving credit" to various authorities for "centrifugalism," can only import into the new movement the same old conflicts as exist in the prevailing authoritarian setup. For instance, we can

point out that the "mighty effort" of Robert Crosbie, on many tangible facts, was mightier and earlier than that of Dr. de Purucker. This is again the same old "I am of Peter, Thou of Paul," sort of contention. We fear that the "centrifugalist" movement can never proceed in spiritual harmony and mutual good will if the various exponents thereof are to entrain into it their old personal loyalties to extreme authoritarian figures of the past—whether Tingley, Purucker, Annie Besant, Leadbeater, or whatnot. Our "centrifugalism" goes clear back to the source, the *bona fides* of later figures being judged thereby.

We will invite Mr. Harris to explain further in our pages. He may wish to do so also in *The Canadian Theosophist*. Through private correspondence we consider him a man of intelligence and sincerity, and will be only too happy if he can reconcile these points.

Sincerely,
Editors,

Theosophical Notes.
10 St. Leonard's Terrace,
London, S.W. 3,
November 16th, 1953.

The Editor,
The Canadian Theosophist,
Sir,

I find Mr. Barratt's letter in your issue of October 15th very interesting, though for reasons other than those for which it is evidently written. The provisional conclusion I draw from it is that C. W. Leadbeater and Babbitt followed the example of our most eminent scientists, in confirming one another's results by independent investigation. But perhaps you have proper evidence that C.W.L. was a plagiarist, and are not merely expressing personal and, if I may say so, embittered, opinions. If you wish to prove your point, the evidence must be given, and I, for one, will wel-

come its appearance in print if it exists.

You will realize, of course, that I am doing this both to know the facts and because I think it is important that you should clear yourself of any accusation of being untheosophical in the name of Theosophy. You make statements which, if untrue, border on the libellous, especially when the person libelled is not here any longer to defend himself—and, from what I understand, would not have done so in any case.

I myself am no defender of clairvoyant investigation of subjects which cannot be proved, if these are put forward as dogmas. But you are surely ignoring C.W.L.'s own statements in different places, that this work of his claims no authority, but is put forward as his own personal findings, for consideration. If you knew the T.S. as a whole, and did not confine yourself to attacking a very small section of its members, you would find that intelligent F.T.S. anywhere in the world, will take up the same attitude: one of reserved judgment on matters outside their ken, such as C. W. L.'s writings — and, for that matter, most of H.P.B.'s too. For, remember, even H.P.B. is no dogma in the T.S., and she herself states very clearly that there are many errors in her writings.

There seems, according to you, to be a great deal wrong with the Adyar Society. And I will agree with you that many things have happened, and doubtless will happen, which are mistakes. But one thing is certain: that dogmatism, curtailment of freedom of thought and intolerance of those with whom the majority disagree, is not one of them: a thing you must doubtless have realized, since you and Mr. Barratt have always been welcome members of the Society so long as you choose to remain in it, despite your sometimes unjustified castigation of it.

Yours sincerely,
L. J. Bendit, M.D.

Dr. Bendit is a distinguished member of the Theosophical Society in England; he is also a member of the Medical Group of the Theosophical Research Centre, London, and took an active part in the preparation of *Some Unrecognized Factors in Medicine*, the second and revised edition of which was published by the Theosophical Publishing House, Ltd., London in 1948. Dr. Bendit gave the Blavatsky Lecture in London in 1948; the title of his thoughtful and well-prepared paper was *Adam, The Prodigal Son, A Study of Man*.

We regret that we have aroused the indignation of a fellow member for whom we have a deep respect. It is most unfortunate that our criticisms of Mr. Leadbeater's teachings are apparently considered in some quarters to be motivated by bitterness. We are not bitter toward any member of the Society—in fact we regard our fellow members with affection and are deeply appreciative of the friendships which have been established with many, many members, some of whom we have never seen but whom we have known through correspondence. These friends include members of other Theosophical organizations and unaffiliated students, all of whom we regard as forming part of the one Theosophical Movement. While we may not have as good a grasp of 'the T.S. as a whole' as Dr. Bendit has, we have perhaps a wider knowledge than he has of the world-wide Theosophical Movement. We hold opinions which differ from those held by the majority of the members of the Adyar Society, but surely that is our right and privilege. Dr. Bendit would be among the first to recognize the symptomatic nature of the position, "He does not agree with me, therefore he hates me and is bitter towards me." We, of course, do not demand tolerance for our views, but we try not to be intolerant towards others. 'Tolerance' is defined

as 'not to judge of or condemn with bigotry' and in this sense we are not intolerant of Mr. Leadbeater or his teachings; we have examined these teachings, compared them with other sources and after reason and judgment have rejected them.

Dr. Bendit asks for evidence of Mr. Leadbeater's borrowing from Babbitt's books, and advances the inviting theory that Mr. Leadbeater had been pursuing an independent line of research and had arrived at results similar to those of Babbitt's. We do not know of any evidence to support this theory. Eyewitness evidence of borrowing would be impossible to obtain. The strong evidence of borrowing lies in a comparison between Mr. Babbitt's book and the 1895 *Lucifer* article—the drawing of the Leadbeater atom might have been a tracing from Babbitt's as they are so similar. Other evidence must be taken into consideration,—the nature of Mr. Leadbeater's alleged clairvoyance, his character, and all the circumstances surrounding the 1895 revelation.

Many members seem to believe that Mr. Leadbeater's clairvoyance consisted of an ability to see on the astral plane in the same manner that we see on the physical plane—that when he exercised his clairvoyant faculties the entire astral world was spread out before him and that he could see all events in history, past, present and future, that he could soar up to the Logos itself and view the cosmos, and, if he so desired, could magnify his power of seeing so as to be able to perceive the minutest forms of matter.

The popularity of Mr. Leadbeater's books and the authority which he claimed and which was freely granted to him by the members by virtue of his alleged extraordinary powers, have resulted in the Adyar Society's being Leadbeaterian in its approach to Theosophy. Comparisons have been made

between Mr. Leadbeater's teachings and those of the Masters and H.P.B., their agent. These are in print and are available to anyone who desires to know (*Theosophical Notes*, Box 65, Berkeley, California, is at present reprinting Miss West's book, *Theosophy and Neo-Theosophy*). If the Adyar Society is ever to assume its rightful place in spreading the Masters' teachings, undiluted by lower psychism, it is important that Mr. Leadbeater's claims to powers surpassing those of any other student, should be evaluated correctly. We think that this will come about eventually as new students come into the Society, but in the meantime we will continue to contribute our little quota to hasten the desired end.

Let us go back to the halcyon days when the Society was producing 'Arhats' and 'Initiates', many of whom were mediocre personalities, some of whom attained their exalted rank because they had made substantial contributions to the Society's funds, (By the way, what has become of the twelve 'Arhats', the disciples of 'the Coming Lord'?) Let us examine a conversation between Mr. Leadbeater and one of the 'Initiates'. 'Initiation' took place on the astral plane during the sleep of the physical body. This individual had been told that he had been initiated—but unfortunately he could not remember the ceremony! The conversation took place before the 'initiate' was to be called as a witness in a certain case and he was full of anxiety about it.

"Whatever shall I say if they ask me about my being an Initiate? I do not remember anything at all of it."

Mr. Leadbeater's reply was: "But why don't you remember? You ought to be able to remember."

"Well, if I let my imagination play on it, I can get a sort of impression about it."

"That is just what you ought to do."

There is a cause for such imaginings. How can you expect your clairvoyant power to develop if you destroy its delicate beginnings". (quoted from *Is This Theosophy?*, E. E. Wood).

Mr. Wood went on to say: "It is doubtful whether any clairvoyant operates through senses in any way comparable with those familiar to us as sight, hearing and the rest. It is more probable that when impressions are clearly received in terms of these. . . it is due to 'visualization' superimposed upon the impression, and forming a species of interpretation. When I put this theory before Mr. Leadbeater, he quite agreed to it and wrote a passage to that effect in one of his books."

The above paragraph sets out summarily, *the ordinary and accustomed process used by creative writers in their daily work*, according to the results of a close study carried on for many years concerning the use of the 'subconscious' in creative writing. To receive an 'impression' from the deep subliminal self, to work upon the basic impression, elaborating, inventing, letting the story-making faculty have full sway, subject to the censorship of the mind, is a process familiar to and used by many writers. (See Mary Austin's *Experiences Facing Death*, *Everyman's Genius*, and other works of Miss Austin's, published by The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis.)

In *Experiences Facing Death* Miss Austin states 'that revelation of the past, foreknowledge of the future, disclosure of items not acquired through the intelligence, clairvoyant cognizance of contemporaneous events' coming to her from within herself is part of her literary work, a power within herself which she uses daily. "To take the measure of his own subconscious capacity, to control and direct it, to take advantage of its sudden spurts of superiority and restrict its lapses into infantilism, is the first business of the

practising novelist. . . It is so quick this other entity—as much quicker than the intellect as the cat is quicker than the mouse—so inherently anxious to arrive at the given point before the intelligence can forestall it, that it performs tricks equivalent to sleight of hand, tricks that occasionally deceive its host." Miss Austin forthrightly declares that she is not a medium, she is simply using powers which are part of the stock in trade of any creative writer.

If Mr. Leadbeater's powers were of this nature, and the paragraph quoted from Mr. Wood's book would seem to indicate clearly that this is so, then we come to an entirely different concept of his 'clairvoyance'. He had a vivid imagination, and, given a suitable basic impression or idea, he could elaborate upon it at length. *Invisible Helpers*, *The Lives of Alcyone*, *Man, Whence, How and Whither*, *Occult Chemistry* bear the outer signs of being largely the result of imagination and invention superimposed upon a basic idea. This kind of 'clairvoyance' can be accepted, and our acceptance of it would help to put Mr. Leadbeater's writings in their proper perspective in the literature of the Society. Mr. Leadbeater's psychic sensitivity to 'impressions' and his ability to 'visualize', do not in themselves require us to accept his works as authoritative textbooks on Theosophy.

The basic idea of *Occult Chemistry* was the atom form in Babbitt's earlier book—a book with which Mr. Leadbeater was familiar. Whether Mr. Leadbeater received an independent psychic 'impression' of it, whether he brought the memory of it out of his subconscious when the need arose, or whether he borrowed it directly, are matters to be pursued further.

That is all there is space for this month.

The 'we' used throughout the above is the editorial 'we'—Mr. Barratt has not yet seen Dr. Bendit's letter.

MYTHS

(Continued from Page 150.)

scientific spirit driven by a deep-lying urge to master the world by understanding it, works steadily towards its goal—a perfectly clear conceptual model of reality, adapted to explain all phenomena by the simplest formula that can be found. "In the Ionian schools of Eastern Greece, science comes to its fulfilment in Atomism. When we contemplate the finished result, we see that in banishing the 'vague' it has already swept away everything in which another type of mind finds all the value and significance of the world . . . Life has gone out of nature . . ."

The mystical spirit worked along other lines. "To Pythagoras, philosophy was not an engine of curiosity but a way of life and death. The western schools, overshadowed by Pythagoreanism, are rooted in certain beliefs about the nature of the divine and the destiny of the human soul. Upon these beliefs their philosophy of nature is built. Holding no less strongly to the characteristically Greek conviction that the world must be rational, these western philosophies present themselves as a series of attempts to justify faith with reason. Parmenides boldly condemns the sensible world to unreality, when it seems to conflict with the logical consequences of religious preconception. Empedocles expends a wealth of ingenuity in devising a reconciliation with science. Plato sinks in the titanic effort to stand with feet on the earth and uphold the sky. What most concerns all three is summed up in the words 'God' and 'Soul'—the very terms which science so complacently dispensed with.

Cornford's reference to Atomism as the fulfilment of Greek science brings to mind Farrington's study of the relation of politics to science in the ancient world. Like Cornford he believes atom-

ism to be the cumulating point in Greek science, but beyond him he argues well for the Epicureans as the repository of all that was good in both the science and the philosophy of the Greeks. He argues that Plato and all others in the idealist tradition endeavoured to perpetrate the myth as a means of holding the working classes in submission through their superstitions.⁷

We again emphasize our own point of view that science, contrary to both Cornford and Farrington, had its origins in the half-mystical, seemingly impractical teachings of the Pythagoreans and the Platonists. The Atomists were soon forgotten and Epicureanism, in spite of its influence in Rome, seems never to have taken root in Alexandria. One can only wonder why Lucretius throughout the *De Rerum Natura* never makes use of the Alexandrian science which in his time was already retrograding after something less than two centuries of brilliant achievement. He was concerned, of course, with presenting, first and last, the Epicurean point of view, and this may be why he wrote of the phenomenal world as a poet might, without much depth of understanding.

(To Be Continued)

1. F. Creedy, *Human Nature Writ Large*. University of N. Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.
2. Translated by Thomas Taylor, London, 1804.
3. Ibid: *The Works of Plato* Vol. 1, p. 140. In a footnote Taylor says that the Eleusinia were denominated by Proclus as the most holy of the mysteries.
4. C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types* p. 216.
5. Ibid.
6. F. M. Cornford: *From Religion to Philosophy*. Edwin Arnold, London, 1912.

7. B. Farrington: *Science and Politics in the Ancient World*. Allen and Unwin, London, 1946.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Sacred Flame, by Phoebe D. Bendit. Theosophical Publishing House, 68 Great Russell St., London, W.C.1, England. 1953, 29 pp., Price 1 shilling.

This well-written study of the relationship between man and the deva evolution was the Blavatsky Lecture delivered before the annual convention of the T.S. in England in May, 1953. The author chose this subject because she says she has never known the time in this incarnation when men and angels did not belong together in a composite body. "I have never seen them as unrelated, but always as working together to fulfil the purposes of natural law and human evolution." Therefore, we may presume that what she says rests at least in part upon direct, personal testimony.

What is the role of the devas? Mrs. Bendit answers that from the highest Arupa deva down to the smallest nature spirit, they are solely concerned with carrying out in detail and entirely automatically the scheme of natural law on the plan already laid down in the mind of the Logos. "The Divine Mind works through the Arupa Devas, its instructions being in fact what we call Natural Law." The sub-human kingdoms as well as man on the Path of Outgoing, governed by instinct and driven by desire, are in bondage to natural law. It is only self-conscious man on the Path of Return who learns self-direction, asserts his own will, and thus sets himself at odds with the deva kingdom. This turning point, according to the author, "is actually the most tricky and dangerous in the whole cycle." The human being at this point is like a train going around a curve, his head on the path of return while other aspects of him are still on

the path of outgoing. The pull of nature being exceedingly strong, stresses are set up in the personality due to conflict between aspiration and instinct. In this connection particularly and also in her references to ritual, the author's message has a Buddhistic flavour which always is the flavour of *emancipation*. She says:

"Certain mechanisms aimed at invoking angelic help have always been practised throughout human history in the rituals of ceremonial and magic, and in the use of mantrams. Such ceremonies are, however, intrinsically unnecessary, and in fact, when they become stereotyped and their inner meaning is lost, they become sterile. Even if they remain effective in calling the devas to take part, they may fail to achieve their original purpose because that purpose has been forgotten or distorted. On the other hand, increasingly intelligent appreciation of ritual forms eventually leads to a realization that the ritual itself can finally be eliminated. It serves, or has served, as an intermediary, an indirect means to communicate human intentions to the angels. But such communication can become direct, from mind to mind, as it were, when the human mind learns to function at the unitary or 'Arupa' level of the Buddhimanasic plane. . . The student of occultism often does not realize that the human and devic life are in constant touch. . . People sometimes speak of trying to get into touch with the devas. In practice, the first necessary step is to break what one might term possession by the devic kingdom."

It seems clear that this break on the Path of Return is a necessary step in setting oneself free from the whole order of nature which blindly obeys instinctual law. The candidate for emancipation must develop and use *his own will*.

F. E. G.

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