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THEOSOPHY AND MODERN ASTRONOMY

BY L. GORDON PLUMMER

It is with unconcealed joy that I am addressing a group of people who are acquainted to a degree at least with the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom, because I cannot help but feel a sense of relief that an opportunity has come when, speaking in the vernacular, I can take the lid off. As it happens, I am occasionally called upon to give talks on Astronomy, and for most purposes I must bear in mind the fact that I must confine myself to those ideas that are being discussed in scientific circles today. In other words, though speaking about the stars I must keep my feet firmly on the ground! Were a Theosophical student to discuss glibly the teachings about Globe Chains, Rounds and Races, the Universal Solar System, and the like to groups that have had no basic training in the teachings of Theosophy, his ideas would be classified at once with some of the outlandish and completely inaccurate theories put forward about flying saucers, space travel and the like. Thus he would be doing a disservice to the Theosophical Movement.

Now, a Theosophical student has no need to apologize for his beliefs. The fact that he cannot demonstrate some of his teachings by ordinarily accepted

methods is no argument against them. Whereas the dynamic spirit of H. P. Blavatsky could openly declare them in the face of ridicule and persecution, we have neither her training nor her calibre, and we would not be wise in attempting to work just as she did. However, we have some valuable keys which should guide us in our own work. To understand better what I mean by this, let us look at an important historical fact.

The names of three men of high standing in the scientific field come to mind. Thomas Edison, William Crookes, and the French astronomer Flammarion, were H.P.B.'s direct students, and were they here today they would undoubtedly attest to the fact that their most important work was inspired by her teachings. The world would undoubtedly have waited far longer for many of the things that now enrich our lives had it not been for the intuitive recognition of these men that by far the greater part of Nature's domains lay waiting for discovery and exploration.

So what happened? If we may judge by subsequent events, they did not attempt to prove the as yet unverifiable teachings about Globe Chains. But they

did take certain underlying principles that they had learned about, and which apply not only to what we might call occult astronomy, but to many other fields, and brought these basic principles right into the world of their own experience; and some of the first steps were then taken that have led us to the present time in which we find ourselves surrounded by this marvelous world of electronics. Later men have carried on their work, and have pushed back the horizons still further, but we should not lose sight of the fact that in many instances the initial push was given by H. P. B., when she brought the startling and unorthodox teachings about the nature of the universe and of man.

Then what of us of the present day? Where do the Theosophical teachings fit in with our work? It seems to me that there is a two-fold responsibility here. It is our duty to acquaint ourselves to the fullest possible extent with the latest ideas and findings of modern science. At the same time it is imperative that we familiarize ourselves with the various aspects of the Esoteric Philosophy. The deeper we can study, the better, though we know very well that the deepest aspects of the teachings will seldom be discussed save among the comparatively few who have made the same studies. But the foundation that we shall have built for ourselves will be invaluable, because it will enable us to accomplish two things.

First, it will enable us to practice the self-restraint necessary for selecting those special teachings that will strike a harmonious note with modern research, recognizing that all things will come about in their own time. The once large gap that stood between Theosophical and scientific thought is steadily closing, and we look forward to the day when that gap can be bridged altogether. However, it is utterly useless for us to do battle with modern science if we

haven't the faintest idea about what modern science teaches, and we cannot talk intelligently with people who have studied modern thinking unless we also think in the same terms. It is also of the greatest importance that we know that we are standing upon firm ground when we discuss our Theosophical teachings; hence the need for grasping both the ethical and the technical teachings of the Ancient Wisdom. Therefore it seems that we are wasting valuable time if we sit back and bemoan the fact that our ideas are too unorthodox for general consumption. We have a most valuable contribution to make, and we can take an active, in fact a leading, part in pushing back the horizons of modern thought. Why should this work be left to others? Why should we not take our rightful places in the work that aims at human enlightenment based upon spiritual ideas and ethical living?

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In this paper I shall bypass much of the technical information about the 200-inch telescope on Mt. Palomar, which can be found in any library, and I shall discuss two or three findings of modern science that have a direct bearing upon the teachings of Theosophy, and which will show us how far the horizon has been pushed back already.

One of the most heart-warming advances in modern thought gives us a new approach to the matter of life in the universe. The belief once commonly held that life is an accident of Nature, has largely given way to the far more wholesome belief that life may be fundamental, and that matter is an outgrowth of life, not life the chance outcome of the behaviour of matter. It is so generally recognized now that matter and energy are one and the same, that it is but a step farther to the Theosophical viewpoint that the various energies in the universe, some known to us, and others completely unsuspected, are the automatically

working aspects of Cosmic Electricity or Fohat. These energies operate in such a manner that their operations can be observed and tabulated, with the result that we have enunciated the numerous "laws of Nature". By their aid we are able to study the behaviour of energy and matter, which enables us to construct with fair accuracy the story of evolution of the universe in general, and of man in particular, and so the sciences have come into being. Thus, given certain conditions in which known events take place, the results are bound to follow along the lines revealed to us by these "laws of Nature". But the unpredictable is always popping up, and the day will come when we shall have to recognize that life in the sense of volition and awareness is as fundamental as is gravitation, or light, or any other form of radiant energy. So, rather than take the limited view that this earth happens to provide an environment favourable to the evolution of living things (and we rather grudgingly admit that this could possibly happen elsewhere in the universe if conditions were right), let us cut through the bonds imposed upon us by the requirements of modern research, and say in the Theosophical tradition, that where conditions favour it, life can no more help appearing than an electric spark can help appearing if we bring the wires from a battery together. Consider this illustration:

Electricity may be applied in a number of seemingly unrelated ways, as for instance in driving a motor, in lighting a lamp, in electro-plating, in arc-welding, in electronics, including radio, television, radar, x-ray therapy, and so on. There seems to be wide divergencies between these things that electricity may be made to do, but we accept these things without question. Actually it should be no less conceivable that Life, as the energy of consciousness, may work in manners so totally divergent

that we would be tempted to discount other manifestations of this cosmic energy as having no real existence. Nevertheless, this idea is the crux of the whole teaching of invisible worlds and Globe Chains.

Once we are willing to abandon the self-centered viewpoint that life does not exist unless it manifests in the manner that ours does here on Earth, then, at a stroke we have bridged that awful gap that has existed in men's minds between ourselves and God. Imagine living content in a universe that contains nothing—absolutely nothing—between us men of Earth and the ineffable glory of God, with the endless wastes of space filled with utterly useless stars and galaxies, all of it God's handiwork to be sure, but nonetheless completely devoid of life! It is no wonder that our foremost thinkers, religious, philosophical and scientific, are working together in their own manners, and in their own fields, to push back the horizons. The universe as we used to see it will no longer satisfy us, and every advance in modern thinking that tends toward broadening our understanding will be received with joy by all earnest students of the Ancient Wisdom, especially as the new ideas ring true to the fundamental concepts of universal life as found at the core of all the great religions and philosophies of the world.

Another line of research that is of interest to the Theosophical student is that of the nature of worlds that we cannot see. For years we have studied our own books which contain teachings about the invisible worlds, and it is best to utter a word of caution. We must not think that when the Astronomers speak of invisible worlds they mean what we mean when we speak of the Globe Chains. We must be very careful not to put theosophical words into their mouths, or to read theosophical meanings into their books, but by the fact that they have discovered literally thous-

ands of stars by means of photography using plates that are sensitive to infra-red light, and that more discoveries along this line will follow with the use of the new radio-telescope, we have some pointers which may some day lead to new ideas about the structure of the universe. These ideas may come closer to the teachings about Globe Chains. It is often argued that there is no practical value to us in these teachings, but it should be pointed out that it is utterly impossible to arrive at a complete picture of the course of Evolution by studying life as it has appeared on this Earth alone. As well try to isolate San Diego from every other city in the United States. Not until our vision broadens to the extent that it will take account of the mysterious processes of the Rounds and Races, and still farther into the Outer Rounds, will we ever have a comprehensive picture of Evolution. That is why a Theosophical student feels that an important step is being taken in the study of unseen worlds.

A third idea that is of the greatest importance to Theosophical students is one advanced by Fred Hoyle in his book "The Nature of the Universe". In substance it is this: He is discussing the origin of the chemical elements. He states, as is well known, that hydrogen is by far the most common element in the universe, and that the sum total of all of the other elements that we find so abundantly on the Earth and in the other planets, is in reality such a small fraction of one percent by comparison with the materials in the universe as a whole, as to be virtually insignificant. Since the creatures on the Earth absolutely depend upon the existence of certain of the chemical elements, foremost among which are carbon and oxygen, this would seem to reduce the possibility of life as we know it, existing elsewhere in the universe, to virtually nil. But here is a point that he makes, which is

of the utmost significance. Putting it in the briefest possible terms, his belief that the reason that the planets are composed of so many chemical elements and compounds found only in the merest traces in the Sun itself, is that the planets and the Sun were not originally fashioned out of the same Cosmic nebula. Those nebulous bodies floating about in space, and destined to become Suns in the incalculable future ages, are not the stuff of which the planets are made. These chemical elements which abound on Earth and on the other planets were fashioned as the result of a gigantic explosion of a Super-Nova. In other words, the materials that support life here on Earth were once at the heart of a Sun. This Sun, in dying, gave birth to the possibility of new life in the form of clouds of chemical elements that coalesced to form the many planets that were destined to revolve around that particular star we now call our Sun. *Fred Hoyle is recognized to be one of the leading astronomical thinkers of the present day, and I would like to take his idea and rephrase it in Theosophical terms.

First of all, I would like to point out that this idea would tend to increase the possibility of life elsewhere in the universe, because Super-Novae occur with considerable frequency, as galactic time would be considered, and if this idea of Dr. Hoyle's is correct, we can readily accept the further idea of planets in great numbers scattered throughout the Galaxy, even though we have no instruments that can detect their existence.

To examine this specific problem, as it applies to our own Solar System, here

* Fred Hoyle is a Fellow of St. John's College, and a lecturer in Mathematics in the University of Cambridge. He is 38 and was born in Yorkshire.

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STUDIES IN THE SECRET DOCTRINE

No. 7. *The Three Fundamental Propositions.*

Three lineages — Secret, Inner, and Outer — have been outlined. Accordingly, there are three realizations, and three Fundamental Propositions.

In the Secret Lineage there is a realization in which knower, knowing, and known are merged in a monistic reality. In that non-dual state, the seer knows what is set forth as the first Fundamental Proposition (S.D. I, 14) :

I. An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable Principle on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought—in the words of Mandukya, "unthinkable and unspeakable".

Passing from that vision to the Inner Lineage, the seer has a realization in which knowing and the known (without a knower) are separate elements. In that dual state, he knows what is set forth as the second Fundamental Proposition (S.D. I, 16) :

II. The Eternity of the Universe IN TOTO as a boundless plane; periodically "the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing," called "the manifesting stars," and the "sparks of Eternity." "The Eternity of the Pilgrim" is like a wink of the Eye of Self-Existence (Book of Dzyan). "The appearance and disappearance of Worlds is like a regular tidal ebb of flux and reflux."

Passing from that vision to the Outer Lineage, the seer has a realization in which the knower, knowing, and the known are all separate elements. In

that pluralistic state, he knows what is set forth as the third Fundamental Proposition (S.D. I, 17) :

III. The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul — a spark of the former—through the Cycle of Incarnation, (or "Necessity") in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term. In other words, no purely spiritual Buddhi (divine Soul) can have an independent (conscious) existence before the spark which issued from the pure Essence of the Universal Sixth principle,—or the Over-Soul—has (a) passed through every elemental form of the phenomenal world of that Manvantara, and (b) acquired individuality, first by natural impulse, and then by self-induced and self-devised efforts, (checked by its Karma), thus ascending through all the degrees of intelligence, from the lowest to the highest Manas, from mineral and plant, up to the holiest archangel (Dhyani-Buddha). The pivotal doctrine of the Esoteric philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in man, save those won by his own Ego through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and re-incarnations.

Since they are propositions derived from seership in the order given, what has been stated as the third can only be established after what has been stated as the second, and the latter can only be established after what has been stated as the first.

Furthermore, an omission of any one would mean that the seen and unseen worlds could not be treated adequately in *The Secret Doctrine*.

No. 8 *Approaching Through the Second Fundamental.*

"Once that the reader has gained a clear comprehension of them and realized the light which they throw on every problem of life, they will need no further justification in his eyes, because their truth will be to him as evident as the sun in heaven." (S.D. I, 20).

It is one matter to establish the propositions by seership, and still another for the average student to understand them as set forth.

The reform of Gautama Buddha can be summarized by saying that the second Fundamental Proposition was made basic for teaching purposes. This implies a psychological emphasis formulated in twelve members called the *nidanas*, or the links of dependent origination. This is the teaching of non-ego in the world of substance, and the exhortation to altruism in the ethical domain.

But the Buddhist teaching which most clearly fits the very form of the second Fundamental Proposition is called the doctrine of momentariness. In fact, this inspires the title of a profound study, *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, by Satkari Mookerjee (University of Calcutta, 1935). This work sets forth the subtle logical arguments that were used by the Buddhists to defend the proposition and to refute opponents. As such it is useful to specialists in Indian logic but cannot be recommended in general. It is mentioned here to indicate the great importance of the concept for Buddhism, as well as to give a reference for those who might wish to study a thoughtful advanced treatise of metaphysical hair splitting somewhat related to our present subject.

A more promising approach for the general reader is through studying the twelve *nidanas*. These are not, however, a chain of causation, as is often erroneously stated in Western books. That is

to say, No. 1 does not *cause* No. 2, etc. Rather, No. 1 is the *condition* for No. 2 which has a cause other than No. 1. For example, in the usual listing No. 1, 'ignorance' (*avidya*), is the *cause* of No. 8, 'craving' (*trshna*), which has as its *condition*, No. 7, 'feeling' (*vedana*). Thus the chain, considered from the standpoint of causation, is a sequence of obvious conditions having abstruse causes.

In the same way, the 3rd Stanza of Dzyan, which sets forth the awakening of the Universe, does not present a situation *caused* by the situation of the 2nd Stanza. In fact, that awakening has as its *cause* a situation in the preceding Mahamanvantara (or great period of objectivity). Analogically, when we awake in the morning, this is not caused by our sleep consciousness, but rather by the act of going to sleep.

As said by H.P.B. in *The Third Message to the American Theosophists*, "We are outwardly creatures of but a day; within we are eternal. Learn, then, well the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation, and teach, practice, promulgate that system of life and thought which alone can save the coming races."

Here we see that H.P.B. also placed greatest emphasis on the second Fundamental Proposition, with other issues woven about that center. H. P. Blavatsky came as one of that continuous line of Teachers who show the Middle Path—the reform of the *Inner man*.

No. 9 *The Stanzas of Dzyan (Cosmogony) and Dependent Origination.*

"When after ages of struggle and many victories, the final battle is won, the final secret demanded, then you are prepared for a further path. . . a path which leads out of all human experience." *Light on the Path*.

During those "ages of struggle," one perfects a mental discipline called "external concentration," and then perfect-

ly comprehends *inner dependent origination*, the formula given by Gautama Buddha.

In that "further path," one perfects a mental discipline called "internal concentration," and then perfectly comprehends *secret dependent origination*,

which H.P.B. chose to call "the Stanzas of Dzyan."

The present writer does not have deep insight into these matters, but yet offers for the reader's consideration the following correspondences, which cover in brief the subject matter of Book I of *The Secret Doctrine*.

Secret Dependent Origination (Cosmogenesis)	Inner Dependent Origination (The first seven members)
Stanza I. Absolute Negation of all phenomena.	1. <i>Avidya</i> , 'ignorance'. The Clear Light of death.
Stanza II. The Blissful sleep of the builders.	2. <i>Samskara</i> , 'plastic karmic formations'—as in a dream.
Stanza III. In two parts:	3. <i>Vijnana</i> , 'cognition'.
1. Emanation of the germ (triangle).	(1) The 'birth vision' based solely on <i>manas</i> 'mind', that is, without cognition based on the 5 (physical) senses.
2. The triangle falls into the quaternary.	(2) 'Cognition' falls into the germ cell in the womb, and is stationed where the heart will develop.
Stanza IV. The Residence and the Residents within the Magic Circle.	4. <i>Nama-rupa</i> , 'name and form.' Four old names—the 4 formless (<i>arupa</i>) skandhas; and a new Form—the <i>rupa-skandha</i> . The 5 skandhas ('heaps') in the womb.
Stanza V. "Fohat" places the germs of wheels in the six directions, and one in the middle, which is the crown.	5. <i>Shadayatana</i> , 'the six inner seats of the senses,' which are the usual five, plus the <i>manas</i> 'mind,' the sixth sense. These are ruled by <i>vijnana</i> 'cognition' in the heart.
Stanza VI. The external universe is manifested.	6. <i>Sparsa</i> , 'sensation'. The world is trisected into inner cognition, sense organ, and external object. This stage begins with departure from the womb.
Stanza VII. The spark (or germ) or triangle) journeys through the worlds of illusion.	7. <i>Vedana</i> , 'feeling'—pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral, the three fruits of karma.

Dattavara.

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THEOSOPHY AND ASTRONOMY

(Continued from Page 20)

are the teachings, as far as I have been able to understand them. The Solar System is a *living entity*, which is evolutionally so far in advance of ourselves as men that by comparison its field of activity is cosmic, whereas ours is limited and mundane. Life proceeds cyclically, that is to say, birth and death are but aspects of growth and evolution. For it is through a constant recurrence of the cycles of birth and death that growth is accomplished. In the case of human beings this process is known as reincarnation, which teaching we cannot go into here, but upon which there is abundant literature to be had. In the case of the Sun and his family of planets, this is known as reïmbodiment, a much more general teaching.

Here, then, is the process as I understand it. There is a very interesting and involved exchange of energies going on all the time between the Sun and the Planets, and this same principle holds true on a far grander scale in the original steps of building the Sun and the planets. Think of the Sun as it is now, the reïmbodiment of a Sun that once was, just as you are now the reïncarnation of a human who once was. Who or what you were in your past incarnation cannot be known, nor can the identity nor the whereabouts of the Sun that was the former reïmbodiment of the present Sun be determined. But, when that former Sun disintegrated at the conclusion of its past life-cycle, the elements that were to form the bodies of its own planets that would some day revolve around its own future reïmbodiment as a Sun, were "created", to use the best word available, and these elements bided their time until the call came for them to reassemble and form the planets that we know today. And that call for which they waited came when the Solar Divinity that had passed through its unimaginable experiences in the Spaces of Space once more took on a body of light and energy, and drew to itself its children that became the planets that we have today. These planets, viewed as they are by the students of the Ancient Wisdom, are also living entities, and they reappeared by a process of reïmbodiment, and the materials for the formation of their somewhat grosser bodies were waiting for them in the form of the clouds of chemical elements that were formed in the manner described.

And what of the planets of long ago that revolved around the Sun that was? That is the other half of the story, not yet hinted at by modern science. Just as there is a karmic relationship between the Sun of yesterday and the planets of today, as described above, so there is also a karmic relationship be-

tween the planets of yesterday and the Sun of today. This can be understood only as we view all things as living entities—not otherwise. A portion of the *body* of the Sun that existed in the past provided the chemical elements of which the planets are formed today. But it is the higher essence of a planet, *not its corporeal shell*, that provides the means for the returning Solar Divinity to effect its reïmbodiment into a body of light and energy. There is an exchange both ways. That is what holds it together as a Cosmic Entity, evolving, growing, becoming ever more and more God-like.

So here are a few Theosophical ideas that come to mind as we study the advancement of modern thought. Whereas the emphasis has been placed upon Science and Astronomy in particular, it should be borne in mind that there is no real separation possible between Science and Religion. The conflict becomes apparent only in those fields where Religion fails to keep pace with modern thinking. When Religion dares to break the fetters of conventional tradition, its possibilities will become endless. It will be the true teacher of mankind. The tendency for us is to regard Science as the ultimate authority, but the men of science are the last ones who feel that they have worked out a complete system of thought for mankind. How well they know that they are asking more questions than they can answer, and the wish that is closest to the heart of all of us, whether scientist or layman, is that the results of present day research may be used to further the well-being of mankind, to the end that we may have lasting peace, based upon the secure foundation of mutual understanding, mutual trust, and above all, unselfish devotion to those ideals and principles that we hold to be higher than man himself. San Diego, California, U.S.A.,
January 10, 1954.

BUDDHIST SIXTH COUNCIL

Vesakha Day, the fullmoon day of May 1954, will be of special significance to Buddhists the world over for that is the date of the opening of the sessions of The Sixth Great Buddhist Council (Chattha Sangayana) in its headquarters which have been under construction for months on a one hundred acre site two miles from Rangoon. The Government of the Union of Burma will provide the funds required for expenses and the Government of Ceylon has formed a committee to raise funds for building costs. The Buddhist leaders of five countries, Burma, Thailand, Lanka, Cambodia and Laos, will form the Advisory Committee, but all Buddhist countries will participate in this joint undertaking.

In anticipation of the presence of thousands of participants, the Committee has constructed an Assembly Hall which will seat 15,000. There are also hostels, refectory, library, a sanatorium and dispensary, a printing building and an administration building with blocks of apartments for the staff. The Council will continue in session for two years and the buildings, which will be used afterwards are of a permanent nature.

Throughout the 2500 years since the demise of the Buddha there have been Five Great Councils held for the re-examination and recension of the teaching of the Buddha. The first was held soon after the demise, when all the principal disciples, including Ananda, assembled to recite, classify and arrange the teachings. In that Great Council, different portions of the teachings were entrusted to different groups of disciples who came to be known as 'Bhanakas' or the 'Reciters' of the texts. The groups of monks to whom these portions of the texts were entrusted and their

disciples after them preserved the Texts by learning and reciting them, and thus the original teachings were handed down by word of mouth from teacher to pupil for over four centuries until the Texts were committed to writing for the first time in Ceylon (circa 29-13 B.C.)

The Second Great Council was held at Vesali in 443 B.C. and the Third at Pataliputta in 308 B.C. with the support of King Asoka, through whose good offices and religious zeal Buddhism spread to almost all the then known world. The Fourth Great Council was held in Ceylon about 29-13 B.C. when the Texts were committed to writing, as it was considered no longer safe to leave such vital

teachings to human memory. The Fifth Great Council was held at Mandalay in 1871 when the Texts were recorded on 729 marble slabs.

The holding of the Sixth Great Council will be a momentous event in Buddhist history. It comes at a time when interest in the teachings of the Lord Buddha is increasing in many lands. The Council will end its sessions on Vesakha Day 1956, which will coincide with the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's Maha Parinirvana. There is a belief current in Buddhist countries that this anniversary will initiate a great revival of Buddhism throughout the world when the Buddhist way of life and universal peace will prevail.

IS THERE A MONOPOLY ON GOD?

BY FLOYD H. ROSS

Few Christians have sought to understand the non-Christian religions *at their best*. On a shrinking planet where diversity is the rule (and where we hope it will remain the rule), every Christian church might well have study groups seeking appreciatively to understand what the non-Christian religions teach. The attitude should be that of the honest inquirer, not of the evangelist or apologist. Some of the shorter Oriental classics like the Bhagavad Gita and the Dhammapada and the Tao-Te-King should be read and discussed as thoroughly as the Bible is often treated by an intelligent minister in a Lenten series or in his midweek services.

The basic human questions having to do with meaning and destiny have been grappled with for thousands of years; yet many of us have been allowed to fall into an idiomatic rut. Some of us might be awakened from our dogmatic slumbers by the words of an Oriental poet or sage where the repetition of Occidental phrases has operated to lull us to sleep

or to superficial conclusions about life. Those who are quite sectarian-minded should ponder the words of King Asoka, of ancient Buddhist fame:

He who does reverence to his own sect while disparaging the sects of others, with intent to enhance the splendour of his own, in reality by such conduct inflicts the severest injury on his own.

The attitude of those who insist that Christianity is "the only way" to salvation betrays a lack of faith and an undue reliance upon certain scriptural passages. The relevant question to ask is, "Why, do such people seek certainty so inordinately?" To seek certainty is to die; to accept uncertainty is to live, to grow, to be strengthened. Our society today has a plethora of persons cursed with neurotic anxieties, anxieties regarding all manner of things. The resurgence of tribalism, or nationalism, is but one more evidence of this profound disease. Many persons are trying to escape from facing the basic question of life, "Who am I?", by identifying them-

selves with various causes; some religious, some economic, some political. They are selling out to partial areas of integration, party, sect, class. These partial areas of integration thrive on feelings of "special chosenness" and exclusiveness. They are made up largely of persons who cannot forget the Mayflower in their past and are haunted by their un-lived lives in the present.

In times of widespread commotion and unrest, it is natural that religions should look to their past. This is healthy insofar as the persons doing this are mindful of the necessity to incorporate insights so gained in the living present. Since the past holds us in its embrace, we need to understand it, but woe unto us if we cling to it or glory in it. Any "truths" so-called that cannot be directly appropriated in the present are of doubtful validity, so far as the fundamental integrative, growth processes are concerned. The "eternal now" is the straight way and the narrow gate into the abundant life.

Christians who call themselves orthodox tend to ignore this. They urge us to take only one segment of human history seriously, that segment culminating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This emphasis was quite understandable in the earlier centuries of Christian history. The early theologians knew no other religious histories save that of the Hebrews and those writings that came to be called the "New Testament." They interpreted the meaning of their new outlook on life in the only terms they were intimately acquainted with. (That they greatly distorted many important sections of the Old Testament writings is now pretty generally admitted by Hebrew and Greek scholars of the Bible. I wonder how many of the Christian laymen have been encouraged to re-read the Old Testament as a record of the background of the Jewish religion, and not just a prologue to the New Testament?)

To continue to interpret human history solely in terms of early, orthodox Christian interpretations of the Bible is no longer excusable. Let Christians make their confession of faith that for *them*, Jesus is Lord; but let them not try to legislate to Jews, Hindus and Buddhists, that Jesus must also be Lord for them.

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Jacob Boehme expressed it very succinctly several centuries ago, to the great consternation of his Lutheran pastor: "A Christian belongs to no sect whatsoever." There have been persons in every age, I suppose, who, while profoundly appreciative of what has come to them through their cultural heritage, have refused to apotheosize it or get nervous about defending it. God is not to be defended but explored. Revelation is not to be defined but developed.

We live in a time when increasing numbers of people are a little weary of being labelled "Jew" or "Gentile," "Negro" or "White," "Christian" or "Buddhist." That which unites us is our humanity, not our culture or our colour. Part of the curse of the modern world lies in the fact that so many of us have *not* discovered our humanity, but rather insist upon identifying ourselves unduly with fragments of our selves. Like the Prodigal Son, once we "come to ourselves," we will start on the journey back to the source.

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Only as we negate our fragmentary interpretations of the meaning of life and history do we remain teachable. Every historical religion is a strange mixture of superstition, magic, credulity on the one hand, and wonder, curiosity, reverence on the other. They have been vehicles for delivering man into further bondage whenever the former elements have predominated. They have been vehicles for delivering man from fear into true blessedness whenever the latter

elements have been primary. All of us need to ask for forgiveness for our corporate trespasses and blind spots, no matter what religious tradition we happen to stand in, even as we hope our brothers in the other religious traditions will forgive us our trespasses against them. Let us honour a Moses, a Jesus, a Gautama, a Lao-tse, a Confucius; but let us not linger too long in the shadow of the wayside shrines of the past. If the spirit of these men is as eternally present as we of the faith have said, then we should not be concerned unduly over the particular robes that it may wear in differing cultures. What one man calls the "Eternal Christ" another man may call the "Eternal Buddha," and who among us is dogmatist enough to stand in judgment upon equally honest professions of personal faith?

What we are talking about here is not so much a matter of *breadth* as it is of *depth*. A liberalism that skims the surface is just as pernicious as a literalism that tries to stop the life flow. If Christians, for example, ponder deeply enough upon the doctrine of the incarnation, they may begin to understand what Coventry Patmore, the Christian mystic, understood when he wrote:

The one secret, the greatest of all, is the doctrine of the Incarnation, regarded not as an historical event which occurred two thousand years ago, but as an event which is renewed in the body of everyone who is in the way to the fulfillment of his original destiny.

The rightness and tightness of some Christians' attitudes toward the non-Christian religions suggests to me something of the depth of such persons' feelings of "cut-offness." Feeling cut off from the ground of his true being, he compensates for it by assuring himself that it is the *others* who are cut off from God, from the true pathway, from the only way. Only as such a person finds

release from the clutches of his anxieties, his sense of alienation, his shadow selves, through the insights that come through redemptive relationships with his deeper self and with other selves, can he move beyond his dogmatic brittleness. As John Oman put it in *Honest Religion*, fixed ideas, fixed institutions, and fixed theologies are all symptoms of a spiritual sickness. As Lao-tse put it centuries ago, one must become sick of his sickness if he wants to be cured of his sickness.

Christians have nothing to fear from a two-way educational or missionary process, though they have much to learn, even as Hindus and Buddhists have learned from contacts with Christendom. "There is no truth that does not include all truth," that is, if it be experienced deeply enough. Nor is it that we need to appreciate Semitic history less; rather we need to appreciate Oriental wisdom more in order to be wiser in reinterpreting our own heritage. We must not idealize the East or its religious concepts; but we *must* cease idealizing ourselves and our own religion.

I personally do not look for the conversion of great numbers of the adherents of the other religious traditions to some form of Christian sectarianism. Overlooking the ever-present problem of "rice Christians," the major impact of Christian values upon these other peoples or cultures will be registered in a continuation of those traditions but with changed emphases. I would hope for the same thing to happen to Christianity. In any event, the process should be gradual and certainly non-coercive. We must respect the right of each person to travel at his own tempo in so far as the fabric of a society is not jeopardized. Just as we must let a child *be* a child in order that he may move through childhood to true maturity, so we must be willing to let persons be "Christians," "Buddhists," "atheists," "theists,"

“Moslems,” “Sikhs,” with the hope that each will grow toward an ever larger spiritual maturity.

The world is a divine vessel;
It cannot be shaped;
Nor can it be insisted upon.
He who shapes it, damages;
He who insists upon it loses it.

(Tao-Te-King, 29).

Just as historical religions have a tendency to bind people to the past, so they have a similar tendency to fixate people unduly on the future. This may take the form of undue concern about the so-called “after-life,” attempts to prove immortality, or to predict the coming of some golden age. Reflective persons everywhere have intimations of a larger good yet to be realized; but an inordinate concern about that good is just as stultifying as undue absorption in the past. Christians do not know the secrets of the future, though they have often spoken as though they did. Neither do Buddhists, Parsees, Moslems or Hindus. The task of mature religion is neither to cling to the past nor to chart the future, but to help man find meaning in the present. “Sufficient unto each day is the challenge thereof.” “Be not anxious about the morrow . . .”

Hence for me the futility of attempts to prognosticate about the future condition of the religions. Equally foolish is the attempt to devise another presumably universal religion. Every religion presumes in some sense to be universal, but it ends up by becoming parochial and sectarian if the leaders are not universal men. Not even the Roman Catholic Church is truly catholic, for it excludes more by its dogmas and definitions than it includes. The same is true of the Bahai faith and other more recent efforts. All such efforts tend to be too self-conscious; for despite disclaimers, such groups are concerned about adherents or followers.

No man-made synthesis or ecclesiasticism can suffice. For what is called for is not a new “ism” with a new set of followers, but a new attitude and a deepened concern to try to raise the questions that really matter: “Who are we” and “How may we come to ourselves?” Whatever synthesis emerges, it will be the un-self-conscious by-product of a cosmic process, or if you will, of the cosmic bias toward reintegration and human reunion. To try to manufacture or blue-print a synthesis is to be guilty of the same mistake involved in trying to pursue happiness: the more you pursue it, the less of the genuine article you have.

We may have taken the greatest stride of soul that men can ever take in any generation when we learn how to cease clinging to our parochial differences. The rest is not in our hands.

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ANCIENT MYSTERIES

BY W. F. SUTHERLAND

(Concluded from Page 14)

V.

Judging by the innumerable monuments and inscriptions that have been unearthed in Greece proper, in Asia Minor, in Syria and in Palestine, the religious motif was certainly present, but in the light of the researches which Ward conducted, this motif was by no means primary. Many of the fraternities had objectives of a much more practical nature, objectives closely related to the arts and crafts and related to the interests of the “Ancient Lowly” as Ward calls them, in their own welfare, in the gaining of a livelihood and in the protection of that livelihood. The religious motif could thus very well have been left to sink into the background, even though the societies concerned

might ostensibly and even ostentatiously place themselves under the patronage of some favourite God or Goddess and might celebrate the appropriate rites. We still assign in like manner Pagan deities and Christian saints to specific activities and callings.

Such societies were known by many specific names, for the most part according to their tutelary divinities, as for instance: the Companions of the Sun, the Sons of Bacchus, of Minerva, of Jupiter Atabyris and Jupiter the Saviour, all these being found at Rhodes. Others known as the Heroistes, and the Serapistes similarly flourished at the Piraeus. Generically, however, these and others like them appear to have been known as Thiasoi or Eranoi according to the emphasis placed on their outward or the inward activities. Mead mistakes these names as being specific in application but as Thiasoi, the societies would seem to have been identified by the public activities of their members, as when on the occasions of their many festivals they paraded in the open streets, with demonstrations of joy, singing and dancing in honour of their Gods. As Eranoi, they were societies meeting in secret, several times a month, the members enjoying communal meals, associating convivially together, and no doubt discussing their economic problems to the furthering of both their individual and collective well-being. Having both objects in view, these societies had their presiding officers, treasurers, secretaries, stewardesses, legal counsels, and their managers of the religious rites, as well as their priests. They collected dues, received gifts from well-wishers in substantial amounts, and though all may not have ranked high in the social scale, there appears to be no question that for a number of centuries, at least, they were indispensable.

Ward terms them "Solonic Unions" in

view of the encouragement and protection afforded to them by that wise and beneficent legislator.

It is often said of Solon that his reforms were of the negative sort, and to a degree he bears this out in one of the fragments of his writings which have come down to us. He calls on Black Earth, the Mighty Mother of the Olympian Deities as a witness to his deeds, for he drew from her bosom the pillars everywhere implanted and so freed her from the bonds of slavery. Many men he also restored to Athens, men who justly or unjustly had been sold abroad or who had gone into exile; he freed those who had been reduced to slavery at home; and all these things he had wrought by main strength, fashioning that blend of force and justice which is law. Ordinances for noble and base he likewise wrote, fitting a rule of jurisdiction straight and true for every man. Had another, a villanous and a covetous man grasped the good as he had done, he would not have held the people back and had he complied with the wishes of either party in the State, his city would have been bereft of many sons. He, therefore, stood at bay, defending himself on every side, "like a wolf among a pack of hounds". (8)

On the basis of this, his own estimation of his work, Solon seems to justify the charges levelled against him. The legendary Ion of the heroic age, when the Hellenes were in the upper stages of barbarism, had established government on the basis of clan and kinship; Theseus, later on, gave effect to what had become the aristocracy of birth; and Solon advancing but a little way, based his on property, his four classes having a purely economic foundation. He went only half-way in his political reforms, stabilizing the best, amelior-

8. Kathleen Freeman—*Work and Life of Solon*, London, 1926.

ating the worst and achieving a nice balance of power among the warring factions of his time. It was only with Cleisthenes that the place of domicile was established as the basis of representation in the democratic assemblies, as with us.

But after all, the enjoyment of the full fruits of democratic processes must be won and hardly won; they are the results of slow growth over the years, of a "broadening down from precedent to precedent". And when we consider Solon's contribution in this light, we see that it was by no means negligible even though it was of an indirect nature, for what he did was establish the framework within which the principles and forms of democratic processes could grow and develop. It is just possible that there were associations of craftsmen, and others, banded together for various purposes as far back as the days of Theseus, and it may very well be that the formal characteristics of Ward's Solonic Unions were but vestigial, having been handed down from the barbaric age with its group family life, communal meals, and the other features of close association and intimacy which went with the pursuit of common purposes within the gens; it may well be again that the laws of Solon were but a paraphrase of the still more ancient laws of Amasis, an Egyptian king; but when all this has been said the work of Solon was still of transcendental importance. He confirmed the right of individuals to band themselves together for various purposes, and established this right as an inalienable privilege.

Gaius, the Roman historian, is quite explicit on this point in his comparison of the *Sodales* of his own country with the fraternities of Greece. In his commentary on the "Law of the Twelve Tables" he says that this law gave to the *Sodales* unlimited right to combine for any purpose whatsoever, and that it

appeared to be but a translation made in Numa's time of the Law of Solon which read as follows: "Whether they be the people, or brotherhoods, or priests and priestesses, or boatmen, or communists who eat at the common table (including those who prepare the feasts and the holiday festivals for the members) or those occupying houses in common, or engaged in traffic at sea; in fine all those living for one another hereby are publicly proclaimed free to unite themselves".

Tradition, whether trustworthy or not, informs us that it was through Pythagoras that Numa gained his knowledge of Solon's Law. This would not be surprising since Pythagoras was either a late contemporary of Solon, or came along only shortly after. Moreover, we have every reason to believe that Pythagoras and his followers were not uninterested in such matters. We do them an injustice when we think of the Pythagoreans solely as the source of the "idealist tradition" in Greek philosophy. They were also practical people, engaged in town planning and other activities savouring of social and political reform.

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 life itself, are as simple as the simplest mind of man. Feed the hungry with them.—Idvll of the White Lotus.

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

The Theosophical Society was formed at New York in 1875. It has three objects:

1. *To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.*
2. *To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.*
3. *To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.*

The Society affords a meeting place for students who have three aims in common, *first*, the ideal of Universal Brotherhood; *second*, the search for Truth, and *third*, a desire to associate and work with other men and women having similar aims and ideals. The acceptance of the First Object is required of all those who desire to become members; whether or not a member engages actively in the work contemplated in the Second and Third Objects is left to his or her discretion.

The nature and purposes of the Society preclude it from having creeds or dogmas, and freedom of thought and expression among its members is encouraged. An official statement on this point; “. . . there is no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none of which a member is not free to accept or reject.” The statement calls upon the members “to maintain, defend, and act upon this fundamental principle . . . and fearlessly to exercise his own right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.”

Theosophy or ‘Divine Wisdom’ is that body of ancient truths relating to the spiritual nature of man and the universe which has found expression down through the ages in religions, philosophies, sciences, the arts, mysticism, occultism and other systems of thought. Theosophy is not the exclusive possession of any one organization. In the modern Theosophical Movement, these ancient truths have been re-stated and an extensive literature on the subject has come into being. The teachings are not put forward for blind belief; they are to be accepted only if the truth that is in them finds an echo in the heart. Each student should by ‘self-induced and self-devised’ methods establish his own Theosophy, his own philosophy of life. The Movement encourages all students of Theosophy to become self-reliant, independent in thought, mature in mind and emotions and, above all other things, to work for the welfare of mankind to the end that humanity as a whole may become aware of its diviner powers and capabilities.