

# THE CANADIAN THEOSOPHIST

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## THE DARK MILLENIUM

BY W. F. SUTHERLAND

I.

Coupled with the merging of the historical and the mythical in what afterwards became the Gospel narrative, there may have been also a restatement of old truths and a new emphasis on the individual, if not throughout the whole of the Christian Movement, at least among some of the many sects which then flourished. The influence of Alexandria and the existence of the Hermetic and other literatures, now considered suspect, by the orthodox, would point to this.

The emphasis was not alone on the idea that man had a soul. All religions had long taught this, and some had done so in terms of pre-existence and of a pilgrimage along the ever-turning wheel of birth, in terms of an evolution through the lower orders of creation, and thence, individualized in man, to some divine end but dimly sensed.

Hence man was an evolving being forced by immutable law to wend his way slowly upwards, suffering on the way for past misdeeds and being rewarded for those of merit. This idea formed part of the theory of the cosmos set forth in the *Parmenides* of Plato, of the downward sweep from a central source of being and a slow (cyclic)

return after countless ages of evolutionary struggle.

While it lay at the core of many of the older religions and while it seems to have been held also by certain of the early Christians, notably Origen, by itself it was incomplete. There was an indifference to the evils and injustices of this life which, to cite the worst example, led to the rigid caste system of India with all its centuries of filth and squalour. Had the Fathers not found it expedient to discard the idea, we might still have used it to justify the filth and squalour in the early days of the industrial revolution.

Complementary to it was another idea, also old, the idea that each was a duality—a fragment of the divine—a being held in bondage to the flesh along with another and an evolving being, but a divine being none-the-less and one capable of full freedom whenever it so willed, through an immediate participation in that greater ocean of divinity whence all had emanated. The Kingdom of God was within as well as without.

The idea of an essential divinity immanent in man seems to have been long taught in the Mysteries, and only later was it taught more openly by the Great Teachers. Lao Tsu taught it; the Bud-

dha made it the basis of his teaching; the Pythagoreans and the Orphics had it; and it and it alone makes much of Plato intelligible. It may well have formed the central theme in that mystery drama we now know as Christianity, for here it still appears, though in distorted form, in the notion of an individual salvation through an act of faith as well as in the ecstatic experiences of the mystics.

The Neo-platonists taught it more openly than did either the Pythagoreans or Plato; as did also the Gnostics and others of the heretical sects. The Manicheans, Paulacians, Catharists, Picards, Paternes, and above all the Albigenses, sects whose origins went back to the remote East, held in one way or another to the dualistic theory as to the constitution of man. The dualistic heresy was not that of an anthropomorphized Deity and a Satan external to man; it related quite intimately to man himself.

For something like a thousand years the idea was perpetuated obscurely by individuals, by underground movements and secret associations, and by the fraternities of those whose ostensible interests were directed along other channels. The alchemists concealed the teachings in their pseudo-chemical jargon; the troubadours, in imitation of the sufis, to whom indeed they bore a close affinity (sang of the great experience in terms of earthly love and adventure; while their northern comrades, the trouveres, spoke likewise of the same in terms of the mythical Knights of the Round Table and of the Quest for the Holy Graal. Wade, the Norman, said of the Arthurian legends: "Nor all a lie, nor all true, nor all fable, nor all known; so much have the story-tellers told, and the fables fabled in order to embellish their tales and they have made all seem fable."

The idea passed to the early Rosicru-

cians, but not necessarily to those who now have taken the name, and to those few of the medieval guilds which could well have borne lineal descent from the ancient builders. It was indeed from the Cabiric rites of Samothrace that our Saxon ancestors are said to have adopted and adapted the name of "guild" together with their secretive methods of instruction and their lofty moral codes. (1)

It was likewise central in the thinking of the great humanists of the renaissance.

It was in the *Meno* that Plato developed the idea that man possessed a knowledge of first principles which had come down to him from some long-forgotten past—a knowledge which was part of his own divine heritage. And it was not to any of the aristocracy of Athens, nor to Meno himself, but to Meno's slave, that the Socrates of the dialogue turned to have him recall, from his innermost being, the knowledge requisite to the proof of one of the most famous of the problems of antiquity.

In the Mysteries, Man was Prometheus who, stealing fire from heaven, brought it to earth for mortals; he was Isis, searching for the dismembered body of Osiris; he was Hercules, charged with his twelve labours; he was the hero in all mythologies, the Prodigal Son, wandering, searching, after his own lost divinity and in conflict with the adversary in the body, the Proteus of the water-realm who by all accounts was quite a magician in his own right. "When I was a little child, in the palace of my Father

Out of the East, my native country,  
My parents sent me forth. ..

And they made a covenant with me and inscribed it on my understanding, that I should not forget it and said:

'If thou go down into Egypt, and bring back thence the one pearl which is there, girt about by the devouring serpent,

Then thou shall put on again the garment set with gems. . . .

And become one with thy brother who is next to us, an heir in the kingdom'."

—The Gnostic *Hymn of the Robe of Glory*.

In later days, men searched for the Holy Graal, the philosopher's stone, and the Lost Word.

Whatever the truth of the matter, we do see this duality, this interpenetration of opposites in man—the evolving being, and the God-like creature. Parable, fable, myth and legend bear witness to his animal-like proclivities, and conversely so do they also bear witness to his creative powers and to his infinite capacity to rise above the animal when he so wills.

That these teachings were present in the early Church, and that they were not given out indiscriminately to everyone even within the fold, is evident both from the New Testament itself and from other allusions to more or less esoteric doctrines. In Mark 4:11 we read "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables."

Origen, writing in the first half of the third century also had his reservations:

"That there should be certain doctrines not made known to the multitude, which are revealed after the exoteric ones have been taught is not a peculiarity of Christianity alone, but of philosophic systems in which some truths are exoteric and others esoteric. Some of the hearers of Pythagoras were content with his ipse dixit; whilst others were

taught in secret those doctrines which were not deemed fit to be communicated to profane and insufficiently prepared ears. Moreover, all the Mysteries that are celebrated throughout Greece and barbarous countries have no discredit thrown upon them. . . . To the literal-minded we teach the gospel in the historic way, preaching Christ Jesus and him crucified; but to the proficient, fired with the love of the divine wisdom, we impart the Logos." (2)

## II.

Even as early as Origen's times, there were signs of a changing emphasis and a retrogression. There were those who attacked Origen on the grounds of unorthodoxy and in the foregoing quotation he appears not only to be defending Christianity against the attacks of Celsus who wrote some seventy-five years previously and who had been all but forgotten; he appears also to defend his own position in the matter. Origen can be said with good reason to have been the last of those who united within themselves the pagan learning with the yearning of the Christians for a spiritual perfection. Here, it is rather significant of his stature that Ammonius Saccas, the Neo-platonist, is said to have been the teacher of Plotinus, the greatest of them all, and of Origen himself.

As time went on, Christianity separated itself out and became a religion with characteristics, dogmas and beliefs all its own. To some it offered the ceremonial observance of the old pagan festivals in new garb; to others it offered an object of devotion in a great and unique leader; to still others it offered high moral ideals and a means, through the mystic Christ, whereby the corrupt and mortal man might be transferred into a spiritual and holy being. Christianity also taught a law given by God for the governance of man's life and

coupled with it the promise of a blissful hereafter for its observance. It transformed itself into a Church; it became a highly organized institution, and by virtue of this fact, one so powerful as to challenge the very authority of the state.

Accompanying this change, there would appear to have come also a change in the character of the persecutions suffered by the faithful. Ward,<sup>(3)</sup> whose sympathies are wholly with the underdog, closely identifies the early persecutions with those inflicted on the working class generally, while Ridley<sup>(4)</sup> identifies those which came later with the struggle between the church and the state now also become theocratic in its own right with the deification of the Emperors. According to him the persecutions of Galerius and Maximus were of this character and they failed just because they were not ruthless enough.

With Constantine, if not before, the Church became persecutor in its own turn. Constantine, of wholly disreputable memory, espoused Christianity for personal and eminently practical reasons arising out of the convenience of the deathbed repentance and made of it the state religion of the Roman Empire by reason of its supposed unifying influence. By so doing, he supplanted the worship of the Sun God Mithra who likewise had been exalted not many years before. Mithraism being wholly a mystery cult was ill-adapted to the requirements of a state religion.

Gibbon says that to those slaves who had not already embraced the new faith, Constantine gave freedom of a sort, and to those already free who likewise conformed he gave a white garment and thirty pieces of silver. The common people were thus purchased at such an easy rate that in one year twelve thousand

and men were baptized at Rome alone, with women and children in proportion. Nor was Constantine content with such positive aids to the establishment of new faith, he also employed coercive measures, issuing edicts against the recalcitrant and against those holding to the opinions of the philosophers contrary to Christianity. During the reign of Constantius who succeeded Constantine the persecutions became more systematic. The Emperor Julian is on record to the effect that before his time many had been imprisoned, persecuted, driven into exile, or slain outright for their pagan beliefs, while whole towns and villages had been laid waste.

Had it not been for the untimely death of Julian a thousand years of similar persecutions and intolerances might well have been avoided. But Julian was slain in battle with the Persians after a short reign of only two years, and so failed to revive the pagan religion of the Greeks. After the brief and uneventful reigns of Jovian and Valentinus, Theodosius became Emperor. In 389 he caused the great statue of Serapis at Alexandria to be destroyed and in the same year or shortly after Theophilus of the same place destroyed the library save for a remnant later pillaged by the Arabs. St. Cyril, his successor, in his own turn occasioned the slaying of Hypatia, who was clubbed to death by "Peter the Reader".<sup>(4)</sup>

From then on, all vestiges of the old were sought out and destroyed. Books, texts and other documents were burned; statues were smashed beyond repair or were baptized into the new faith. Something similar happened when the plundering and priest-ridden armies of Spain came upon the ancient faiths of the New World. The Mysteries lingered on in somnolent Greece until the reign of Justinian who finally abolished them and in 529 A.D. closed the Platonic

Academy, thus bringing the Neo-platonic renaissance to an end.

Countless thousands from then on were ruthlessly slaughtered in an endeavour to exterminate the teachings of antiquity. Within the fold, the persecutions were especially severe and those who held to the old truths paid bitterly for their beliefs long before the officers of the Inquisition busied themselves with the protestant sects and their beliefs, twice removed from pagan origins.

(To Be Continued)

1. John Yarker: *The Arcane Schools*. Tait, Belfast, 1909.
2. In *Contra Celsus*: Bk. i, Ch. 7, quoted by Yarker *ibid*.
3. Ward: *The Ancient Lowly*, Open Court, Chicago.
4. F. A. Ridley: *Julian the Apostate and the Rise of Christianity*, Watts, London, 1937.

UNITED LODGE OF  
THEOSOPHISTS

Los Angeles 7, Calif.  
June 20-25, 1954.

Dear Associates:

For the past several years it has seemed appropriate for "U.L.T. Letters" to call attention to notable theosophizing trends in contemporary thought. Since 1909 the United Lodge of Theosophists has concentrated attention upon maintaining the currency of theosophical doctrines in a world little inclined to give them serious consideration. Now, with evidence that important aspects of the theosophical purview, and even its terms, are filtering into the language of intellectual leaders, the educational endeavours of Theosophists are bound to take on new dimensions. However, this

cycle of expanding theosophical interest also emphasizes the importance of the labours of the past forty-five years. Those who have been grounded in H. P. B.'s timeless teachings are thus enabled to see clearly the meaning of converging trends.

From the beginning, U.L.T. has served as a symbol of the always difficult attempt to represent doctrinal essentials of Theosophy without embracing the illusion that the whole Theosophical Movement is bounded by doctrinal limits. Thus the emphasis upon "independent devotion" and regarding the "true Theosophist" as "belonging to no cult or sect, yet to each and all." Whenever a theosophical organization has imagined itself to be the sole custodian of theosophic wisdom, the Movement has suffered from sectarian evils. The devotional heart of the Movement must never be permitted to flow into the narrow channels of partisan feelings and claims; hence the crucial importance of the metaphysics and psychology outlined by H.P.B., as securing the minds of students from dogmatic attitudes. And while Theosophy is not mere "speculative" philosophy, it is nonetheless true that in an age marked by the further incarnation of the Manasic principle, speculative philosophers are drawing closer to an understanding of the basic symbolism of *The Secret Doctrine* and may soon sense the relevance of the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation to many problems which still thwart understanding.

As indicated by H.P.B. in her *Key to Theosophy*, the ideas and views presented by intellectual leaders gradually leaven the thinking of the general public. Already an increasing number of psychologists, educators, anthropologists, and biologists have restored usage of the term Soul to their areas of discussion, with widely beneficial effects

promised as a result. Many developments evidence this, as, for instance, the increased popularity of *The Bhagavad-Gita*, recently issued in a Pocket Book edition, while a 1953 CBS "Invitation to Learning" program showed considerable appreciation of the profound message conveyed by that great philosophical discourse. The formation of an "Academy for Asian Studies" on the West Coast has further directed attention to the importance of comprehending Eastern philosophy. Meanwhile some anthropologists are whittling away at the supports of the nineteenth-century dogma of man's animal origin, and we find in the popular work of a noted brain specialist evidence that the difference between the "soul" of man and the "soul" of animals is so great as to indicate a basic distinction in origin.

The experiments in extra-sensory-perception have resulted in a sizable increase in the number of psychologists who are willing to grant that the survival of the soul is an open question, while some psychologist-philosophers have undertaken to reevaluate the symbolisms of Eastern philosophy, with the conviction that, here, preserved through the millennia, are vital clues to the reality of man's "Higher Self". In the face of all these rapid changes in intellectual climate, the student of H. P. Blavatsky finds himself less embattled against world opinion, and discovers the magnitude of the theosophical brotherhood in *ideas* which H. P. B. strove to bring to realization. Yet the thrill of seeing such dynamic action on the broader fronts of the Theosophical Movement is still reserved for the very few—the most intuitive among the leaders mentioned, and for Theosophists themselves. U.L.T. centers and publications offer focal points for the clarification of this vision, and a means by

which all may become aware of the current acceleration of progress toward a soul-satisfying philosophy.

We may, then, to the best of our abilities, emulate the example set by H.P.B. herself in her writings—make constructive use of all available speculations and discoveries outlined in current publications, thus demonstrating that there is nothing sectarian or exclusive about Theosophy. And if H.P.B. is ultimately to be recognized as the greatest philosophical prophet of recent centuries, the clarifying and integrating vision of her work must be made apparent through application to the contemporary scene. True, the central work of U.L.T. since 1909 has been deliberately limited—devoted to preserving intact the teachings of H. P. Blavatsky and William Q. Judge; today, that work of preservation necessitates a greater application of mental effort if it is to become clear that Theosophy is not so much a set of doctrines, as, essentially, an educational enlightenment touching every phase of human thinking and striving. More than ever, perhaps, it is possible for inquirers to be helped to understand that Theosophy is not "a religion", while yet it stands for a body of tested knowledge which each can make his own.

One more Lodge has acquired a permanent and beautiful home—The Paris Lodge—with increasing need of, and now the increased facilities for, becoming a stronger part of the world-current toward enlightenment. Such is the aim of all Lodges and of the great working body of U.L.T. Members, whom we greet today in memory of the Founder of this Association, itself embracing every friend of the human race.

Sincerely and fraternally,

Parent United Lodge  
of Theosophists.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Mr. P. H. Stokes of Winnipeg writes me to the following effect "The Wayfarers Lodge expect to have a permanent meeting place in a private home in the near future. A number have joined during the past year nearly all of whom are recent immigrants from Europe." This is good news and I hope that the impetus thus started will continue, and that the Winnipeg Lodge, so long dormant, will once again be one of our flourishing centres.

\* \* \*

I have received two donations from Ottawa, one for our General Fund and one for the Vietnam Fund. These are very much appreciated but must be treated as anonymous unless the sender wishes to give me his name which was not mentioned in the letter.

\* \* \*

There is now a new edition of "Theosophy—An Attitude Toward Life" a book of essays written by Mr. Dudley W. Barr, which originally appeared on the front page of the Toronto Theosophical News. This book is of exceptional interest to theosophists and others and is strongly recommended. It has been out of print for some time but is now obtainable for 50c by writing to the Librarian, 52 Isabella St., Toronto.

\* \* \*

Now that the medical faculty in America has fully endorsed the findings of the doctors of Great Britain—the spearhead of the attack on excessive smoking and its deleterious effects on health and shortening of life—we can expect a barrage of propaganda from the vested interests to mitigate the expected losses to the tobacco trade, which at a low estimate will exceed a billion dollars. Let us hope the public will not

be deterred in their efforts to safeguard their health, and deal with the subject by at least restricting themselves to a moderate use of the weed. It would be a wonderful thing if, in the same way the public was warned of the bad effects of consuming so much beer and liquor. This cause of so much sorrow and misery would be assuaged to a large degree by the moderate use of these beverages, and thus two scourges of civilization would be ameliorated to a large degree. The billions of dollars expended annually on these two commodities could be so easily diverted to things of more moment and for the betterment of humanity at large.

\* \* \*

It was with great pleasure I attended Convention of the American Section held at Olcott, Wheaton, Illinois. I was delighted to renew acquaintances with many old friends, most of them well known to the Toronto Lodge. The National President, Mr. James Perkins, and Mrs. Perkins; Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Cook; Mr. and Mrs. Norman Pearson; Mr. Ballard and a host of others. But dominating all was the President, Mr. Sri Ram and his charming consort, Mrs. Bhagirathi Sri Ram and their son, who is a medical student in Chicago. It was indeed a pleasure to meet Mr. Sri Ram again and to have several intimate talks whereby I realized still more his great understanding and sympathy for everybody's point of view. One day he gave a lecture for members only and I was enthralled not only with its contents but with the beauty of language and sentiments expressed therein. Among the visitors was Mrs. Minwalla, Presidential Agent for Pakistan and Mrs. Hopgood, General Secretary of Puerto Rico, especially interesting to me for my daughter is living there. The Convention programme was most comprehen-

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sive and covered most phases of Theosophical endeavour. All this, coupled with discussions and intimate talks, gave me a feeling of elation and I came away happy and inspired with an urge to try and transmit some of this enthusiasm to Canada. My reception was most cordial; everywhere I felt that the presence of the Canadian General Secretary was looked upon as a presage of goodwill and friendliness and a drawing together of the Sections in the bonds of friendship and brotherhood. E. L. T.

“If through the Hall of Wisdom, thou wouldst reach the Vale of Bliss, Disciple, close fast thy senses against the great dire heresy of separateness that weans thee from the rest.”

*The Voice of the Silence.*

ORPHEUS LODGE REACTION TO  
MR. REDFERN'S MEMORANDUM

Reading Mr. Redfern's Memorandum, C. T. May, containing suggestions to bring more power to the Adyar T.S. for the benefit of Mankind, one cannot help thinking of some of the stalwarts of the past and wondering what they would think of it. I am thinking of Chas. Lazenby, Roy Mitchell, A. E. S. Smythe and W. C. Clark, who in Canada, fought to expose Pseudo-Theosophy for the false Light which it is and to reclaim the Theosophical Society for Theosophy and the work of human enlightenment for which it was founded. They succeeded in bringing about polarization in Canada on this issue, which resulted in splitting the Membership into two groups, our Canadian T.S. with its official organ the Canadian Theosophist, whose loyalty went to Theosophy and the original programme of the T.S., and the other, the Canadian Federation, an organization directly attached to Headquarters at Adyar whose loyalty was given to the then existing Leaders, Mrs. Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, and to their teaching, Pseudo-Theosophy. This position still exists unchanged today, a quarter of a century later, in spite of repeated well-meaning but mistaken attempts to make these two polar opposites lie in the same bed for the sake of brotherly appearances.

These men, who were almost entirely responsible for establishing this line of cleavage in Canada, worked upon a different principle from that suggested by Mr. Redfern. They strove to bring truth and illusion face to face, knowing that *where this is successfully carried out*, truth will always conquer. In doing this they made use of a law of spiritual dynamics which, like most basic truths, is self-evident when clearly comprehended. It states that spiritual energies



cannot be used to produce results unless projected from a positive stand, and moreover are backed up by an immovable resistance to take the recoil. The principle of its action is exactly the same as that governing any physical energy. For it to do work there must be the resistance, otherwise the energy wastes itself upon the thin air. The best illustration is the firing of a gun, for it is very obvious that the removal of the breech-block to take the recoil leads to the dissipation of the energy and the mark is not reached. So with spiritual energies, unless a positive stand is taken behind some principle or idea put forward and the inevitable strain upon the personal nature, which results, is withstood without backing up, no spiritual work, no work of enduring value can be done.

Have you never witnessed a speaker put forward to fellow-students some strenuous ideas which he believes of great importance and has taken his stand behind and which are not easy for his audience to take, and later in answer to questions intended to modify and weaken his stand, see him retreat step by step and see the strained faces relax. "All is well; he is a good fellow"—and everything is exactly as before. Nothing was accomplished because the breech-block gave way and the pentup energy escaped harmlessly into space. Another somewhat different illustration, well-remembered still, was the occasion when a lecturer met the members of three lodges and gave a talk in which he clearly explained the many foolish things they were doing to the neglect of their real work. It was an address which by its content should have aroused intense indignation and antagonism, or profound self-questioning but instead it evoked only amused grins, and at the end, everything was as before.

Why? Because his address was given without that punch which says 'this means you' and would make his remarks inescapable. The lecturer had not taken a positive stand from which to project his ideas, result, there was no force to bring home the truth of his remarks to each individual, and although energy was expended, no work was done.

In order to see this law in action one cannot do better than study the history of the early days of the Theosophical Movement when H. P. B. was around with only a few years to accomplish the tremendous task of bringing Theosophy to the notice of the world, and the Mahatmas were projecting as much energy as the human channels would take without breaking down. H.P.B. was the main resistance and took unimaginable strain, but the amount of spiritual energy projected into human life to back up the truths They offered, depended upon the solidarity, the unbroken brotherly bond, which existed between the members in their dedication and loyalty to the cause of human enlightenment. The solidarity amongst the members of the T.S. broke down and was patched up and broke again, and each time it broke the work automatically stopped until the resistance, the solidarity was re-built. Attempts were made to form small groups within the T.S. such as the London lodge, the unity of whose Inner Group had to have 'that true brotherly unity which moves a large body of men to act as one single man and endowed with one single heart and soul' so that the energy could be concentrated there. Later an attempt was made to unite all the really serious students in the T.S., those willing and able to take a pledge to their Higher Self, to form a strong centre for projection, and a united resistance to take the

recoil,—the Esoteric Section. Always the measure of a group's solidarity around its chosen ideal under the stress of personal strain is the measure of its usefulness, and its solidarity depends upon the ability of its individual units to prevent their chosen value from being submerged by clamouring instinctive energies under the domination of self-love.

H.P.B.'s inner group was a repetition upon a small but far more intense scale. What actually was accomplished by these different efforts? At least we know that at a time when religious and scientific materialistic prejudice was at its height, the Light of Theosophy was successfully launched upon the world. What followed was up to us students of Theosophy.

This law of spiritual dynamics then was the method used by the men of Canada mentioned earlier, in their year by year efforts to awaken the members to the fact that the T.S. had lost sight of its great purpose—to bring Theosophy to the attention of the best minds everywhere as a hypothesis to be examined and tested, and had given its allegiance to a tawdry travesty of Theosophy and spent its entire energies in seeking proselytes to this teaching. And now, Mr. Redfern proposes another method,—that of peaceful penetration and infiltration.

Great changes have taken place since the time 35 years ago when the Canadian Theosophical Society separated from the American Section, T.S. to go it alone and the above-mentioned men set to work to make Canada the bulwark of free thought in the Adyar T.S. In those days the high-sounding, noble sentiments ever flowing from the mouth of its president, Annie Besant, urging the utmost freedom of thought and "don't believe anything because I say it" was accompanied in almost every lodge by a

closely guarded atmosphere of conformity in thought and feeling which our brothers in Russia might well envy in maintaining the 'Party line'. The slightest attempt at individual thought was so frowned upon that anyone so undisciplined in 'followership' was forced to give up or get out, and a request to read the Secret Doctrine was enough to put the member in his place and that a suspect and an ostracized one.

Now today many changes have come about; the Secret Doctrine has been unearthed and dusted off and the "Letters" for so long under the ban, are freely quoted. We find the President of the American Section, Mr. Perkins, telling us\* in his Editorial how the drastic inner experiences he had gone through had led him to a deeper appreciation of the Secret Doctrine and its ability to throw light on the mystery of human life. Again recently in private conversation as well as in those public addresses which we have heard, our elected President Sri Ram appeared to incline towards Theosophy and to avoid reference to Pseudo-Theosophy, and would, one feels, back up a movement toward the original lines laid down for the Society so long as the smooth-running of his organization was in no danger of disturbance.

And so perhaps the time has arrived when the more alert members of the T.S., released by the lapse of time from their hypnotic thralldom to the 'Beloved Leaders' and weary to death of the pre-digested pabulum of Pseudo-Theosophy, may be ready to turn to a more manly diet. Perhaps too a lurking feeling that there may be something in the rumours heard that in following blindly the teaching of their Leader, they have been side-tracked from Theosophy and have failed in their duty as members of the T.S. founded by H.P.B. and her Teachers, and they may be ready to profit by

Mr. Redfern's Suggestions. I hope it may be so.

\*See *Theosophical Notes*, April, 1954.

Vancouver, July, 1954.

### CORRESPONDENCE

3 Howard Street, Apt 2.  
Toronto, July 20, 1954

To the Editor,  
*Canadian Theosophist*,  
Toronto.

Dear Editor,

In "Office Notes" of your June issue, we are reminded to express views on the "Alternative Policy" as put forward by the Peace Lodge.

Mr. Redfern is summing up the untiring efforts of "The Few", who for several decades have tried to re-establish the Original Teachings of the Founders of our society. The methods of disseminating them, as well as directions and warnings by the Founders should here be considered. As long as new students have not covered the Original Works and assimilated the philosophy to the point where they are able to distinguish between the difference of Theosophy and Neo-Theosophy, it is in my opinion shortsighted to expect from the student a critical appraisal. From my own experience over almost twenty years and discussion with *new* students, who for instance in one of our large libraries were offered at random the books from half a dozen successor movements, the majority remained without a firm theosophical foundation.

Many drifted into other movements, some being told, that the teaching from Oriental Masters was injurious to our more refined western bodies. Others accepting the claims of Mrs. Alice A. Bailey, were busy informing the world of the imminent return of the Christ "the one who walked this earth 2000 years ago", covering our planet with

Spiritual Triangles and special Invocations. To my knowledge none of these enquirers were asked to read the history of the Theosophical Movement and so definitely regarded H.P.B. as outdated. Why Mr. Redfern wants to confuse the mind of new students with this type of neo-theosophical literature, I do not understand. If we for instance accept Alice A. Bailey as a "must" in our libraries, we must also include Max Heindel, Rudolf Steiner and a score of others. These claims to be or have been successors to the trained messenger of the Masters H.P.B., makes "sad" reading, then why continue to accept these claims as a *must* for critical study?

The mind of present day enquirers is already tired and confused of our twentieth century chaos, mental hospitals are crowded, few have the time to study in peace and at leisure. On the other hand one wonders why Mr. Redfern and his group do not mention instead the most scholarly theosophical works of Prof. Ernest Wood and Dr. Alvin Kuhn? Unless the Adyar Society officially designates certain neo-theosophical literature as "in opposition" to the original teaching—and only a "commission inquirendo" from all theosophical societies and independent groups could work this out, I cannot see, that the present suggested "Alternative Policy" will clear the confusion or help students. Neo-Theosophical books should in my opinion be advertised as 'reference' material only, sentimental prints of "Our Lady" and others should not be placed in a standard Theosophical catalogue, it is most embarrassing.

A Student.

Editor, *The Canadian Theosophist*:

Mr. T. H. Redfern's contribution to your issue of May 15th under the heading 'A Draft Preliminary Memorandum of an Alternative Policy for the T.S.,

though addressed to the members of his own Society (Adyar), will surely command the sympathetic consideration of every earnest student of Theosophy, regardless of his past or present affiliations or lack of such affiliation today.

It is doubtful if anyone will question the soundness of the basic concept summarized in these words: "Organizational unity is not essential; fraternal accord is." A realistic view of the whole Theosophical Movement as it stands before the world today must convince any thoughtful observer that organizational unity is not only non-essential—it is absolutely impossible *at the present time*. However, fraternal accord among individuals of differing affiliations (or none), who cling with all their hearts and minds to the original corner-stone of the T. S. as expressed in its motto: "There is no religion higher than truth," is not only possible—it is absolutely essential if we are ever to bring to birth that 'brotherhood of humanity, that universal fraternity,' which the Chiefs declared they wanted to establish and which they hoped would 'attract the attention of the highest minds.'

It seems reasonable to assume that most Theosophical students not affiliated with Adyar will have little to cavil at in Mr. Redfern's first ten points; and from what one hears of the policies of Mr. N. Sri Ram, the new President of the Adyar T. S., one dares to be optimistic as to the official reaction thereto within his own society. (\*)

Contrariwise, Mr. Redfern's points 11 to 16 inclusive will most certainly arouse so much controversy outside the ranks of Adyar as to prove conclusively how utterly impossible is organizational unity under the terms he proposes or anything resembling them. However, as regards the various individuals and literary works to which he refers, to some Theosophists of other affiliations

will take vigorous exception, perhaps a measuring-rod for all to adopt is to be found in H.P.B.'s own words in *The Key to Theosophy*:

"The tree is known by its fruits; and as all Theosophists have to be judged by their deeds and not by what they write or say, so *all* Theosophical books must be accepted on their merits, and not according to any claim to authority which they may put forward."—P. 300.

There is so much truth in Mr. Redfern's concluding paragraph that one may fail to see the danger in his assertion that "the open-mindedness. . . that refrains from rejecting what is not disproven establishes the right state of mind for unfoldment of inner spiritual understanding." Question: Can Mr. Redfern *disprove* the recently proclaimed dogma of the Roman Church that the Virgin Mary ascended bodily to Heaven? Since it cannot be *disproven*, must a person therefore refrain from rejecting it? If we accept Theosophy as being both scientific and philosophic, we must reject anything that does not bring conviction to the mind by a preponderance of the evidence. To be sure, we may occasionally miss something worth having by this attitude of insisting upon being convinced; but, on the other hand, we shall save ourselves and the Theosophical Movement from many of the pitfalls of credulity and imposture, which have too often repelled rather than arrested 'the attention of the highest minds'. H. P. B. showed the world that many so-called 'superstitions' were based on genuine occult facts. But this is no reason to encourage credulous 'occultists' in superstitiously accepting as 'Divine Wisdom' or *Theosophia* the dreams or imaginings or lower psychic visions of anyone who talks glibly of the Masters or writes with facile pen of his own supposed clairvoyant revelations,

even if such a one is publicly proclaimed to be an "Arhat" or 'on the threshold of divinity'. Nor should we be misled by one who assumes the role of a godling authorized by the 'White Lodge' to winnow the 'wheat' (the believers) from the 'chaff' (the unbelievers) in a society in which he has usurped the leadership!

One ventures to suggest that a wiser attitude than that advocated by Mr. Redfern for all earnest Theosophists to take, was admirably enunciated by Confucius in the 6th Century B.C. As translated by Ku Hung Ming in *The Conduct of Life*, generally known as "The Doctrine of the Mean", it reads:

"However excellent a system of moral truths appealing to supernatural authority may be, it is not verifiable by experience; what is not verifiable by experience cannot command credence; and what cannot command credence the people will never obey. However excellent a system of moral truths appealing merely to worldly authority may be it does not command respect; what does not command respect cannot command credence; and what cannot command credence the people will never obey.

"Therefore every system of moral laws must be based upon the man's own consciousness. It must be verified by the common experience of men. Examined into by comparing it with the teachings of acknowledged great and wise men of the past, there must be no divergence. Applying it to the operations and processes of nature in the physical universe, there must be no contradiction. Confronted with the spiritual powers of the universe a man must be able to maintain it without any doubt." (Pp. 52-53).

Students of Theosophy have been taught that, under cyclic law, there will be a fresh impulse from the Lodge in the last quarter of this Century. Unless Theosophists, as groups and as indivi-

duals, cherish truth above all else, practising and not merely preaching brotherhood, and esteeming Theosophical principles above positions or personalities, one feels safe in predicting that this coming last quarter-century impulse will find other channels for expression than through any of the organized groups going under the name of 'Theosophy' today. The truths which the Masters enunciated through their Messenger, H.P.B., have not failed to permeate and greatly influence the thought-life of the 20th Century; but in many cases Theosophists themselves and the Theosophical Societies have not reflected too much credit upon the sublime message entrusted to them to disseminate. It may be later than we think—but surely it is not yet *too* late!

Iverson L. Harris.

3006 Glenridge Ave.,  
Alhambra, Calif.,

(\*) The present writer's optimism was greatly reinforced by attending Mr. Sri Ram's public lecture before a large audience in Los Angeles on Sunday afternoon, June 27th. We listened for over an hour to a modest Hindu gentleman of culture, seemingly frail in physique, but with a mind aflame with intelligence and a heart aglow with genuine Theosophic brotherhood. Mr. Sri Ram's presidency augurs well for the Adyar Society, and its members are to be congratulated on electing him, and therefore deserving him.

"Adverse opinions are like conflicting winds which brush from the quiet surface of a lake the green scum that tends to settle upon still waters. . . Mutual criticism is a most healthy policy, and helps to establish final and definite rules in life—practical, not merely theoretical. We have had enough of theories."

*Lucifer*, Sept., 1892.

## GANDHI'S SPIRITUAL SUCCESSOR —ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE

Three years ago, a frail-appearing, bespectacled and bearded man began a revolutionary experiment in land reform in India. Since then he has been walking not only from village to village but from success to success. He is the 59-year-old Acharya (guru) Vinoba Bhave, formerly a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, and now his direct spiritual heir. He is appealing to his countrymen not only to realize but to act upon the realization that wealth is a divine trust to be shared with the needy.

Vinoba is not a statesman, much less a politician, and though he is not considered to be a scholar, he is master of eight Indian languages as well as English, French and Persian and is an avid reader especially of books on psychology. Vinoba is essentially an ascetic of childlike simplicity, a holy man imbued with a zeal to discover what is the Divine Will.

From childhood he discarded luxuries, took simple food, slept on the bare ground, and dressed in light clothing. At age twenty his parents sent him to Bombay for higher studies, but by then he had made up his mind to become a wandering ascetic in search of spiritual peace. He went to Calcutta and then to the holy city of Banaras where he studied Sanskrit and the Hindu scriptures.

Gandhi's convocation address at Banaras Hindu University in 1918 was the turning point in his life. A shy student, he was reticent to approach the Mahatma in person, so he wrote him a letter. This brought a quick reply and the two met, rarely to part again. Under Gandhiji's guidance, Vinoba began the life of a holy man. He did not believe in wearing saffron robes or in subscrib-

ing to any particular Order. He believed in action and in service.

Six miles from Gandhi's ashram at Wardha on the banks of the Paunar river in Central India, Vinoba built an ashram for himself. Then one of India's millionaires gave him a small summer bungalow at Paunar. In this four-acre centre, Vinoba gathered a band of twenty selfless devotees and together they developed a self-contained village.

He has disciplined his body to the utmost austerity and his daily routine has remained unchanged for decades. By 4:30 a.m. he is fresh from a bath and prayer. He starts his day with a fast walk of 15 miles, listening to the woes of the villagers and trying to redress their grievances. It is a sight to see Vinoba marching through the villages in the pre-dawn darkness, accompanied by a handful of devotees, with only a hurricane lantern to light their lonely path.

Vinoba attributes his vitality to his unbending regularity of habits, light diet, the spiritual atmosphere which, as he says, "is itself the best tower of strength," and adherence to Gandhian nature cure.

All his life Vinoba has been shunning publicity, always working unobtrusively behind the scenes. Except to the small coterie of workers around Mahatma Gandhi, he was hardly known until Gandhiji was assassinated. Then the spiritual mantle of his guru fell upon his shoulders.

The economic emancipation of India's millions is Vinoba's goal. Gandhi obtained political independence for them but Vinoba says it is meaningless without *economic* freedom. He trekked to Hyderabad to attend a conference of Gandhian workers in 1951. Disturbances in two of the districts were at their peak. Local communists had set the peasants against the absentee land-

lords and there had been murders and looting. Peasants had seized lands violently; distrust and hatred were in the air. On April 18th, Vinoba addressed a prayer meeting. Some untouchables complained that they did not have lands; they were willing to work but had no lands to work. One V. R. Reddy rose and offered to give 100 acres for the untouchables. At first Vinoba could not believe his ears, but Reddy repeated the offer and at that moment the Bhoodan (land gift) movement was born. Vinoba had found a solution to the land hunger of India's poor; God had sent him a remedy. If, he argued people do not have work and do not have land, there are others who have plenty and to spare. He would bring the giver and receiver together. His mission was charted.

Vinoba first put his plan to the test in the disturbed Telengana district. He found the magic worked. Love displaced hatred, non-violence replaced violence, distrust gave way to mutual confidence. In two months, Vinoba had collected 12,000 acres. Speaking in the Indian Parliament, Prime Minister Nehru referred to the frail figure of Vinoba Bhave marching singly into Telengana and by his words and his action producing a tremendous effect on the people there, possibly having more effect than any armed police could have had.

Both President Rajendra Prasad and Prime Minister Nehru invited Vinoba to visit Delhi for talks with the national planning commission, offering to send an airplane to bring him to the capital. Vinoba accepted the invitation but decided to trek the distance—nearly 1,000 miles under the scorching North Indian sun. Vinoba's march to Delhi was a triumphant procession. High and low competed with each other to give lands which he gave away as speedily as he

received them. When anyone pleaded he had many sons and could not afford to part with his lands, Vinoba had a ready reply: "If you have nine sons, consider me your tenth, and give me my one-tenth share."

Vinoba announced that by April 1954 he should have collected  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million acres, and by the end of 1957 he would not be content with anything less than 50 million acres—one-sixth of India's estimated total cultivable land. The first target has been exceeded. He has so far acquired nearly three million acres from 127,000 landowners.

Many gifts have been from petty landowners. One village in Uttar Pradesh, Mangrot, donated all its lands to Vinoba, the first case of voluntary collectivization. The Maharaja of Dharbhanga donated 118,000 acres and the Raja of Ramgarh gave 250,000 acres. President Rajendra Prasad has surrendered to Vinoba all of his lands in Bihar. Beside President Prasad and Premier Nehru, one of his greatest devotees is the Socialist leader, Jaya Prakash Narayan, who has announced his decision to leave the party work to concentrate on the land-gift movement.

By themselves, these gifts of land cannot solve more than part of India's problems, but few will dispute that Vinoba has placed emphasis in the right place—the *economic* liberation of the Indian masses. His is a movement of great social significance.

A still loftier objective of this remarkable man is to create at Budh Gaya—the place where the Lord Buddha attained enlightenment—a world centre to reconcile the religions of the world. The centre will be known as SAMANVAYA ASHRAM, the School of Synthesis.

—Adapted from *Caravan of India*,  
July 31, 1954.

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