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THE DARK MILLENNIUM

BY W. F. SUTHERLAND

(Continued from Page 101)

III.

When Rome, sick and surfeited, became the easy prey of invading barbarians, organized Christianity seized the reins of government and thereafter gave to Europe about the only unifying influence there was to be found. It was no easy task to control the savage tribes of the northern provinces, nor to reorganize by peaceful means the empire that Rome had seized by force. Yet the Church was successful, to a degree. The deification of the Emperors had ceased and in its stead there arose a new series of hierarchies which led upward from serf to knight or squire, and through intermediate overlords to the supreme rulers of principalities and states. A similar ordering was to be observed within the Church itself, and although the Lords Temporal and the Lords Spiritual were frequently at loggerheads, the relationship was essentially symbiotic rather than antagonistic. A coherent social order thus resulted—one in which responsibilities went hand in hand with rights and privileges. Such, at any rate, was the theory.

Feudalism and the Church were but different aspects of the same institutional ideal. This is fully evidenced by

the Crusades, they being as characteristic of their times as are our forms of political, economic and cultural penetration of this.

Whether it was due to the influence of Christianity directly or whether the barbaric tribes had no use for the institution, slavery, as such, became a thing of the past. While man had thus freed himself from the shackles of the slavery so characteristic of both Greece and Rome, he found himself under those equally burdensome of serfdom and, as if this were not enough, he became subject to the domination of the Church over his very hereafter. St Peter's keys were powerful aids to the enforcement of obedience.

IV.

Art, literature and philosophy outside the Church all perished but within were nobly prostituted to serve her purposes. The cathedral, tall, slender, aspiring heavenward had its roots in the hovels that surrounded it even as the cathedral of the modern business world has its roots in the mire of the modern slum.

Science was no longer allowed to progress and all learning greatly suffered. The troubadours knew the ancient truths and they paid with their lives; Basilides knew them and his books were

burned; Lully knew them and was locked up as mad; Dante knew them and was exiled; Roger Bacon was kept under lock and key. The learning of the times, if such it can be called, was in the hands of the priest who more often than not was himself illiterate. "The Church saw to it" says Unwin "That the minimum number of pupils, most of whom in any case were destined for the ministry were taught. The vast majority of the population were illiterate." (5) There was no longer any institution for the preservation, advancement, and diffusion of knowledge such as the Ptolemies had founded.

An authority which slays tens of thousands and which goes on from there to claim power over the very hereafter is quite apt to stay the moving hand of progress. Intellectually, and spiritually, Europe lay dormant. Even the learning of the past was almost forgotten: with the early persecutions it had fled to Arabia, there to sojourn for a while until the powers of the church had begun to wane and a new cycle of advancement had been entered upon with the renaissance.

V.

As a consequence of the limitations imposed on the bounds of enquiry by political expediency and aggrandizement, the church threw away the old gnosis and came to lean heavily upon Aristotle to make her position secure, theologically. She adopted his "vulgar" dialectic in contradistinction to the dialectic of Plato, and applied it to her own purposes, reasoning syllogistically from premises first assumed and never afterwards substantiated except by way of the word of the saints. Since the instrument is frequently hallowed by its calling, Aristotle's writings came to be of an importance only secondary to that of the Holy Writ itself. After all, Aristotelianism was but the logical supple-

ment to the Mosaic code of the Old Testament.

The Greeks never tried to prove the existence of their gods, at least outwardly and by sheer logical processes of thought. They lived with them; enjoyed them; emulated them, perhaps too assiduously; and built beautiful temples in their honour. They kept their religion, embodied as it was in the myth, fluid and potent. But the Church dogmatized, codified and creedalized; and creeds are always a sign of rigour mortis. With a creed, religion becomes an exercise in logic, an intellectual thing and a fit subject for Aristotelian pettifogging.

Hallam says that "the Aristotelian philosophy, even in the hands of the Master, was like a barren tree that conceals its want of fruit by a profusion of leaves. But the scholastic ontology was much worse. What could be more trifling than disquisitions about the nature of angels, their modes of operation, their means of conversing or (for these were distinguished) the morning and evening states of their understandings?" (6)

This is not to say that Platonism altogether perished. Michael Psellus brought Plato as well as Aristotle into fashion in the eleventh century, but it was not until the fifteenth that Plato and his *Dialogues* were matters of much discussion, and in the meantime the damage had been done.

VI.

Today we see little of the scholastic method pursued save in theological circles, but this is not to say that Aristotelianism has perished or that it will ever perish. For Hiene's dichotomy still persists without as well as within the Church:

"Plato and Aristotle! These are not merely two systems; they are also types of two distinct human natures, which

from immemorial time, under every sort of cloak, stand more or less inimically opposed. But pre-eminently the whole medieval period was riven by this conflict, persisting even to the present day; moreover, this battle is the most essential content of the history of the Christian Church. Though under different names, always and essentially it is of Plato and Aristotle that we speak. Enthusiastic, mystical, Platonic natures reveal Christian ideas and their corresponding symbols from the bottomless depths of their souls. Practical ordering, Aristotelian natures build up from these ideas a solid system, a dogma and a cult. The Church eventually embraces both natures—one of them sheltering among the clergy, while the other finds refuge in monasticism; yet both inces-

santly at feud." (7)

In our time, both are to be found within the cloistered halls of science.

Enthusiastic Platonic natures still reveal their creative powers in the discovery of general laws and principles, whilst practical ordering Aristotelian natures from these laws and principles still build up their dogmas and their cults. Perhaps both are needed and yet the intuitive faculty, that fugitive evanescent thing so hard to command, so difficult to recapture, seems to be the more important.

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5. Kenneth Unwin: Whither England, *The Rationalist Annual*, 1946.
 6. Henry Hallam: *Europe During the Middle Ages*, London, 4th Ed.
 7. Hiene, *Deutschland*.

STUDIES IN THE SECRET DOCTRINE

No. 16. KARMA I.

"At the first flutter of renascent life, Svabhavat, 'the mutable radiance of the Immutable Darkness unconscious in Eternity,' passes, at every new rebirth of Kosmos, from an inactive state into one of intense activity; it differentiates, and then begins its work through that differentiation. This work is *Karma*." (S.D. I, 634-35).

This shows that from the very outset of manifestation, there is *karma*. The word 'karma' means *action*. But *action* according to the sages is a far different thing than the *action* understood in the West. Our common-sense notion of action is a pure abstraction that happened by reason of a supposedly real physical matter. For example, we move our arm; that is to us an action. Our arm

supposedly remains; the action disappears. But to the Divine Eye the situation is quite the reverse: the action remains, our arm disappears. That action is *karma*.

"Learn that no efforts, not the smallest—whether in right or wrong direction—can vanish from the world of causes. E'en wasted smoke remains not traceless. 'A harsh word uttered in past lives is not destroyed, but ever comes again'."—*The Voice of the Silence*.

And as quoted in *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 93:

"When our Soul (mind) creates or evokes a thought, the representative sign of that thought is self-engraved upon the astral fluid, which is the receptacle and, so to say, the mirror of all the manifestations of being."

That is to say, the action cannot be thwarted: it inevitably produces its fruit. That fruit becomes the nature of the thing, intrinsically symbolic, objectively the form of the thing.

As said by Jacob Boehme in *The Signature of All Things* (I, 15):

"Everything has its mouth, to manifestation; and this is the language of nature, whence everything speaks out of its property, and continually manifests, declares, and sets forth itself for what it is good or profitable; for each thing manifests its mother, which thus gives the essence and the will to the form."

Here, the 'mother' is *karma*; 'essence', the symbolic fruit of *karma*; and 'form', the corresponding objective appearance.

This resurgence into objectivity controls what are known as cycles.

"The Grand Cycle includes the progress of mankind from the appearance of primordial man of ethereal form. It runs through the inner cycles of his (man's) progressive evolution from the ethereal down to the semi-ethereal and purely physical: down to the redemption of man from his *coat of skin* and matter, after which it continues running its course downward and then upward again, to meet at the culmination of a Round, when the manvantaric 'Serpent swallows its tail' and seven minor cycles are passed. These are the great Racial Cycles which affect equally all the nations and tribes included in that special Race; but there are minor and national as well as tribal cycles within those, which run independently of each other. They are called in the Eastern esotericism the *Karmic* cycles." (S.D. I, 642).

No. 17. KARMA II.

"Karma has not involved its decrees in darkness purposely to perplex man; nor shall it punish him who dares to scrutinize its mysteries. On the contrary, he who unveils through study and

meditation its intricate paths, and throws light on those dark ways, in the windings of which so many men perish owing to their ignorance of the labyrinth of life, is working for the good of his fellow-men." (S. D. II, 305).

"The Lion of the Law, the Lord of Mercy, perceiving the true cause of human woe, immediately forsook the sweet but selfish rest of quiet wilds. . . He preached on mount and plain and held discourses in the cities, to Devas, men and gods." (*The Voice of the Silence*).

The Lion of the Law, Gautama Buddha, revealed the inner workings of *karma* in many symbolic narrations, called Jatakas (birth stories). It will be recalled that Gautama Buddha, according to the usually-accepted biography, had a wife named Yasodhara. In the article "Sakya Muni's Place in History" (H. P. Blavatsky — Collected Writings, 1883), we are told that Yasodhara is the name of a mystical power. We find proof of this contention in the *Mahavastu*, -Vol. I (translated by J. J. Jones), pp. 101-102:

"Once upon a time. . . this Perfect Man was a king named Kusa. His queen was named Apratima, she who has since become Yasodhara, the mother of Prince Rahula. He who is now the wicked Devadatta was then a regional king, named Jathara. When Jathara heard of Queen Apratima, the passion of desire seized his mind, and he sent a messenger to King Kusa, saying:—

'Give me your consort Apratima, let her become my wife. If you give her not, then get your forces ready to fight.

'Send me a message, O king, to acquaint me of your choice. If you do not, so will you and your kingdom fall into my power.'

"When he heard this, King Kusa said to his wife, "Listen, my queen, to the words of Jathara, and tell me what you

think of them.”

The queen, shedding a flood of tears, replied to King Kusa,

“My lord, I am adept whether the need be for stabbing or thrusting with the sword, and so expert that not even you surpass me in the use of arms.

“However invulnerable he may be, I'll slay him by some means or other, by incantation, spell, or ruse of words.

“I would deliver you, my lord, of two such foes as he; my magic power is incalculable, the world is as straw to me.”

Then, O Son of the Conqueror, Queen Apratima devised a trick whereby King Jathara, all unsuspecting, entered King Kusa's inner apartment, and fell into her power. Queen Apratima then *put her right foot over King Jathara's heart and her left on his ankles* (my italics—Dattavara.)

If the rest of the quoted passage does not prove Yasodhara to be a mystic power, most certainly the italicized portion does. That is not the stance of a woman, but of the occult force which overcomes the opposition.

However, it is plain that those stories have a double content: (1) the literal significance, illustrating the basic truths of *karma*; and (2) the inner significance, illustrating the profound truths of *karma*. For the purposes of the following, it does not matter whether Yasodhara be an actual wife, of a mystic power.

In Vol. II of the same work, translated by J. J. Jones, we read:

“The monks . . . asked him, ‘How was it that the Exalted One went away heedless of Yasodhara?’ The Exalted One replied, ‘That was not the first time that I went away heedless of her. There was another occasion.’ The monks asked, ‘Was there another occasion, Lord?’ The Exalted One replied, ‘Yes, monks’.”

Thereupon, he related the *Syama Jat-*

aka. Therein we find this passage:

“Now this leading courtesan Syama saw the merchant being led out to his execution. And as soon as she saw him, she fell in love with him. As has been said by the Exalted One:—

‘By living together in the past and by kindness in present, love is born as surely as the lotus in the water. By living together, by a look, or by a smile, thus is love born in man and beast.

‘When it enters the mind and the heart becomes glad, even the intelligent man always succumbs to it, for it means that there has been acquaintance in the past.’

“That courtesan had been in love with the horse-dealer during a thousand lives. Therefore it was that exceedingly great love was born in her. She said to herself, ‘If I do not win this man, I shall die’.”

In the preface to the following Jataka, called the *Campaka Jataka*, we read this:

“Then the monks said, ‘The Exalted One was saved by Yasodhara as he was being led out to execution. Yasodhara did much for the Exalted One when he was a Bodhisattva passing through his various lives.’ The Exalted One replied, ‘Yes, Yasodhara did very much for the Tathagata as he passed through his various lives. I was saved by Yasodhara on another occasion when I had fallen into the hands of an enemy.’”

Again, in the same volume, we learn that not for the first time, Gautama was bashfully caressed by Yasodhara; not for the first time was she displeased; not for the first time was she won by skill; and so forth.

Interpreted exoterically, these wonderful stories amply illustrate the rule that habitual action produces a substantial result deeply engrained in the nature of a being. Whenever the opportunity presents itself, the seeds lying

dormant in human nature suddenly spring forth, often in the most startling manner, yet resembling the preceding pattern, just as the crest of a wave resembles the preceding crest. This pulsation alternately reveals and obscures the true content of humanity. It follows that man controls his destiny by keeping or changing his habits.

Interpreted esoterically, the same stories show that occult forces are courted in a manner similar to human courtship. "Faint heart never won fair lady," is just as true for the occult world. But only the pure in heart will win the courtesan Syama, for those "she" favours are called "the *chosen few*." Dattavara.

AND GOD SHALL WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS

(AN ALLEGORY)

I was wandering, one lovely soft summer day, over the Plain of Agram, a great battlefield which lay outside my Southern Indian home of Bangalore.

I was tired and stuffy from overmuch studying, and my mother said, "Go out for a walk, love. It will clear away the cobwebs."

Many were the famous battles that had been waged on this plain that was known as Agram, and my mind played idly among the pages of Indian history, intrigue and romance. Suddenly, an overwhelming weariness came over me and, lying down beneath a flowering tree, I gazed at the hot Indian sky, that was no bluer than its blossoms. My head, pillowed on a springy patch of minute, brilliant scarlet flowers, I fell asleep.

And, in my sleep, I dreamed.

It seemed to me that I was wandering over a plain whose horizons were limitless, and I knew I was travelling over the Plain of the World. All around me was great beauty, and many clear and sparkling streams and rivers watered this fertile and abundant Plain.

The tall trees of Manhood stood straight and strong, casting their shade over the fair and sweet flowers of Womanhood, and the tender buds of Childhood. And they nodded, smiling

at each other, and there was soft music from the running streams, and humming birds.

My heart was very full, and I said to myself—"This is my World, and it is very lovely. I will stay here long, and help the trees, and the flowers and the buds to grow taller, and bloom more fully—and show the tender shoots how to open into perfection."

But, as I gazed on the great beauty of my World, I heard an ominous humming noise, which grew louder and louder. The sky was suddenly darkened by a great black shadow, which spread swiftly all over it. The black shadow came down lower and lower yet, until it covered the fairness of the World like a great, heaving, dark blanket. And I was very afraid, for my enemy was upon the land.

The tall trees of Manhood were striped by the devouring hordes of crawling insects that fell on them, and the flowers of Womanhood cried out in agony under the rain of death brought by these stinking, smothering denizens of the insect world. The buds were seen no more, and their anguished, dying cries rose in the hot, copper-coloured sky, until I could bear them no longer.

Holding my hands over my ears, I stumbled on, and on, stopping here and

there to frantically attack with my bare hands this evilness that was killing my beautiful World—but the stings and searing bites drove me back again and again. Sobbing for breath, I went on and as I looked at the clear streams and rivers—lo, before my terrified eyes they scummed over with green slime, and an awful smell of death and decay rose into the air.

“Help—oh, God” I prayed, “Help!”

I knew by my wrinkled, gnarled hands that I had grown suddenly old, and was very tired. My hair was white as snow, and my strength and courage ebbing fast, when in the distance I heard a voice crying out bitterly.

Stumbling towards this last remaining living voice, I came upon a blind man, his face seamed with dreadful scars and his hands and feet useless stumps.

“Who are you, in pity’s name,” I asked, and his seared and sightless eyes turned in the direction of my voice.

“Thank you, God. Oh, thank You!” he cried. “I—who denied You, thought I was left all alone, to feel and smell and hear the work of my destroyers and to be eventually destroyed myself.”

“Oh, Man. What is your name?” I asked him.

“Reason.” he replied. “These vile insects were the outcome of my experiments in the breeding ground of Fear, of which there were many. Hatred and Evasion; Lies and Lust; Envy and Greed; and Cruelty and Subversion. It was my work to invent and evolve new and more virulent species, until one day I made a mistake, and the evil result of my soulless experiments gained the ascendancy, and turned on me, so that I—their master—became their victim. They destroyed my sight, and scarred me with many scars, and broke my hands and feet, as you can see. I am blind—and everywhere I hear nothing

but the voice of Death!”

Tears of compassion welled from my eyes in great streams, and, bending down, I laid my hand on his shoulder.

“I will be your sight. I will help you to get away.”

As my tears fell on him, a wondrous thing happened. The healing drops gushed from his own seared eyeballs, and mingling with my own, their waters ran in myriads of small, swift streams all over the stricken, putrid earth, cleansing it. And everywhere they ran, the earth became green and young and whole again, and the noxious cloud lifted off my World into the troubled air, with an angry humming. The trees grew swiftly tall, and Manhood threw off its evil adversary—Fear. The flowers of Womanhood, freed from the dread weight of Hatred and Despair, grew sweet and perfect once more, and the buds of Childhood sprang joyously everywhere. For He had wiped away all tears. . . .

I was again young and strong and, turning to Reason, I saw that the flowing of his tears had cleared his sight and washed away the scars. He smiled gladly at me and I at him, for he was whole.

The sound of a great, united paean of music and singing swelled on the soft air, and the trees, flowers, buds and streams joined their voices in the lovely anthem.

Then I—Love—held out my hand to Reason, and he closed his on it. Thus, together, we wandered with a new vision over the lovely Plain of a World reborn.

The mists of sleep cleared swiftly, and I awoke under the darkening Indian sky, but in my heart was the light of comprehension. This, then, was how it must be—Love strengthened by Reason, and Reason tempered and shorn of harshness by the softening presence of

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Love. For with these two go Faith, and
Understanding—over whom no Fear
can gain ascendancy.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Field of Occult Chemistry, by E. Lester Smith and V. Wallace Slater. The Theosophical Publishing House, London; 63 pp. 4/6.

This is the second edition of this booklet, the first having been published in 1934. As might be expected, the text is more up-to-date as concerns modern theories as to the constitution of matter, even though the present reviewer can detect little, if any, advance on the occult side or any rapprochement between the two. The authors themselves state that:

“The task of exact correlation between occult and Orthodox science has proved discouragingly difficult. The structures described by the two schools are utterly different in most cases; apparent relationships have been shown on closer study to be merely superficial, or to lack generality.”

The authors bring trained minds to bear on this problem, since they are both competent in their profession and both are Fellows of the Royal Institution of Chemistry. The text bears witness to this competency and to the judicial scientific attitude which accompanies it. Many more questions are raised than are answered, and perhaps it is not unfair to say that the booklet as a whole can be considered to be an excellent review or critique of *Occult Chemistry*, by Besant and Leadbeater, the standard work on the subject now in its third edition. The authors are favourably disposed to the work and endeavour to find as many parallels to plain ordinary everyday chemistry as their scientific objectivity will permit. Such parallels are few, however.

The difficulty ordinary mortals, such as this reviewer, encounter is not with the chemistry and physics of the scien-

tist but in accepting that of the occultist. This is particularly true in view of the charges of plagiarism which have been levelled against the principle authors. Moreover, whether Babbitt's original material was worked over by Besant and Leadbeater, similar highly organized thought systems are to be observed throughout the history of both religion and science. They can also be seen in the thinking of paranoid personalities, not all of whom are in confinement. Here, of course, I may not be thought to be thoroughly objective, but until the mass of mankind, or at least some of its scientists, become possessed of clairvoyant powers, the whole problem of the occult versus the scientific will remain unsettled and subject to debate.

There is an alternative. Science is predictive on the basis of its known laws. Theories can always be verified by others in a practical way and those which are valid frequently disclose new properties, new relationships of value which have hitherto remained unknown. A rapprochement between the scientific and the occult may yet come about in this way.

W. F. Sutherland.

✧ ✧ ✧

The Doctrine of Awakening, A Study of the Buddhist Ascesis, by Julius Evola, translated from the Italian by H. E. Musson, published by Luzac and Co. Ltd., London, 300 pages, price \$3.00.

Here is a competent study of the Buddhist Way to Enlightenment by a noted Italian scholar, one which can be recommended to all serious students of Buddhist thought. We do not know of any other book in which the doctrine is so clearly and so uncompromisingly presented. It is the first of the author's many books to be translated into the English language, although others have been translated from the Italian into

German. His books which are available in the Italian include, *The Yoga of Power*, *The Hermetic Tradition*, *The Individual and the Future of the World*, *Theory of the Absolute Individual*, and others.

The aim of the book is set out in Chapter One wherein the author discusses 'ascesis' generally and the Buddhist discipline in particular. Asceticism is frequently associated with the idea of mortification of the flesh and renunciation of the world; it commonly appears to be cold, rigid, and detached from the great sweep of human life, concerned only in the one aim of purifying oneself so as to attain 'salvation'. However, in the original Pali, the corresponding term, *Tapa*, meant training, intense concentration, of glowing, almost as of fire, and by implication, carried the idea of mastery, not of retreat from life.

The author considered it "important at the present time that intelligent men should once again understand the value of asceticism in a comprehensive view of the universe. . .independently of the mere religious concepts of the Christian type." He searched history for "a comprehensive and universal ascetic system that is clear and undiluted, well tried and well set out, in tune with the spirit of Aryan man, and yet prevailing in the modern age." He found this in the Buddhist doctrine of Awakening, which is the real significance of what is commonly known as Buddhism.

The Buddhist ascesis, or discipline, is "a technique for the conscious control of force", a method by which 'all the energies of the human will [can be placed] under the control of a central principle'. The Buddhist disciplines, if faithfully followed, arouse 'the highest degree of crystallinity and independence.' The Bhavana (self training which leads to enlightenment) is for Aryas (noble persons) who have the

necessary qualifications to engage upon and persevere in the practices.

The discipline is designed to enable the disciple 'to know by seeing', thus avoiding squandering energy in 'the blind alley of opinions, the bramble of opinions, the thicket of opinions'. In the Chapter entitled "Destruction of the Demon of Dialectics" the author discusses the Buddha's attitude toward those 'truths' which are based on discursive intellect only, and which, no matter how skilfully they are presented and defended by reason, and elaborated into philosophical systems of thought are nothing more than opinions after all. The criterion of certainty arises from direct experience alone; a recognition of the nature of 'opinion' dissolves the net and the mind is freed from the bondage of deference to the opinions of others. 'Opinion' may be right, or may be wrong, but the disciple is not required to examine and decide upon the right or wrong of each opinion.

Chapter six is given to 'conditioned genesis' or the Doctrine of Dependent Origination, the Nidanas, which H.P.B. stated 'belongs to the most subtle and abstract doctrines of the Eastern metaphysical system.' The author points out that the twelve states do not constitute a chain of true causality, but rather of conditionality. The basic element of the series of transformations is avidya, unawareness—'man is a god who is unaware that he is such, it is his unawareness (avidya) alone that makes him a man'. The twelve stages, each of which contains the potentiality of giving place to the next, are set out in detail and the author's lucid comments make this one of the important chapters in the book.

Part II contains twelve chapters on 'Practice'. Enlightenment comes after a process of preparation; each of its stages requires time to master its disciplines. Sila, right conduct 'the harmony

of word and act' of *The Voice of the Silence*, is more than the observance of an accepted morality. "In the traditional world, each ethical system drew its true justification from a supramundane purpose. . . .and from the objective and impersonal fact that to follow or not to follow a particular line of conduct produces corresponding modifications in the essential nature of the individual." In Buddhism, ethics are not imposed; 'they are advocated purely from the point of view of knowledge. . . of knowing objectively what effect on the human being will result from following or not following certain principles and, having discovered this, of behaving accordingly." Therefore, the Four Noble Truths must be practised, and the mind brought under control. Various methods are presented, from the preliminary disciplines on through to the higher stages of concentration. The methods of Zen Buddhism are discussed in the eleventh chapter. Zen is reputed to be based upon a secret teaching transmitted by the Buddha to one of his disciples, and in the all-important matter of achieving self enlightenment, which is or should be the goal of all 'religious' endeavour, the Zen school has probably retained more of the original spirit of the Teacher than is to be found in other Buddhist groups.

In the twelfth chapter there is a return to the primary theme of 'asceticism' and the significance that the Buddhist system may have in the modern world which stands at the opposite pole to that of the ascetic seeking self enlightenment; 'a fundamental orientation of the spirit' is lacking today.

Quotations from the Sutras appear on almost every page, and the words of the Buddha directly applicable to each point under discussion are quoted.

In the author's opinion the concept of reincarnation did not exist in the Vedas

and was a later Brahman innovation. The doctrine is discussed in several places in the book and the author's views are finally summarized on page 247; "We no longer have the absurd idea of a single 'I' which returns or travels from existence to existence, but rather, of various manifestations of one same principle that is already super-individual, but not yet fully conscious. . ."

Students will be grateful to the author

for his excellent presentation of basic Buddhism. We can agree with the translator that Mr. Evola seems to have recaptured the spirit of Buddhism in its original form, and that his uncompromising approach will render an inestimable service, even if it does no more than clear away some of the woolly ideas that have gathered around the Buddha and the doctrine that He disclosed.

D. W. B.

IS THE DESIRE TO "LIVE" SELFISH?

BY H. P. BLAVATSKY

The passage "to Live, *to live*, TO LIVE must be his unswerving resolve," occurring in the article on "The Elixir of Life", published in the March and April Number of Vol. III of *The Theosophist*—is often quoted, by superficial readers unsympathetic with the Theosophical Society, as an argument that the above teaching of occultism is the most concentrated form of selfishness. In order to determine whether the critics are right or wrong, the meaning of the word "selfishness" must first be ascertained.

According to an established authority, selfishness is that "exclusive regard to one's own interest or happiness; that supreme self-love or self-preference which leads a person to direct his purposes to the advancement of his own interest, power, or happiness, without regarding those of others."

In short, an absolutely selfish individual is one who cares for himself and none else, or, in other words, one who is so strongly imbued with a sense of importance of his own personality that to him it is the acme of all his thoughts, desires and aspirations and beyond that all is a perfect blank. Now, can an

occultist be then said to be "selfish" when he desires *to live* in the sense in which that word is used by the writer of the article "The Elixir of Life"? It has been said over and over again that the ultimate end of every aspirant after occult knowledge is *Nirvana* or *Mukti*, when the individual, freed from all *Mayavic Upadhi*, becomes one with *Paramatma*, or the Son identifies himself with the Father in Christian phraseology. For that purpose, every veil of illusion which creates a sense of personal isolation, a feeling of separateness from THE ALL, must be torn asunder, or in other words, the aspirant must gradually discard all sense of selfishness with which we are all more or less affected. A study of the Law of Cosmic Evolution teaches us that the higher the evolution, the more does it tend towards Unity. In fact, Unity is the ultimate possibility of Nature, and those who through vanity and selfishness go against her purposes, cannot but incur the punishment of total annihilation. The Occultist thus recognizes that unselfishness and a feeling of universal philanthropy are the inherent law of our being, and all he does is to

attempt to destroy the chains of selfishness forged upon us all by *Maya*. The struggle then between Good and Evil, God and Satan, *Suras and Asuras, Devas and Daityas*, which is mentioned in the sacred books of all the nations and races, symbolizes the battle between unselfish and the selfish impulses, which takes place in a man, who tries to follow the higher purposes of Nature, until the lower animal tendencies, created by selfishness, are completely conquered, and the enemy thoroughly routed and annihilated. It has also been often put forth in various theosophical and other occult writings that the only difference between an ordinary man who works along with Nature during the course of cosmic evolution and an occultist, is that the latter, by his superior knowledge, adopts such methods of training and discipline as will hurry on that process of evolution, and he thus reaches in a comparatively very short time that apex to ascend to which the ordinary individual may take perhaps billions of years. In short, in a few thousand years he approaches that form of evolution which ordinary humanity will attain to perhaps in the sixth or the seventh round during the process of *Manvantara*, i.e., cyclic progression. It is evident that average man cannot become a MAHATMA in one life, or rather in one incarnation. Now those who have studied the occult teachings concerning *Devachan* and our after-states will remember that between two incarnations there is a considerable period of subjective existence. The greater the number of such *Devachanic* periods, the greater is the number of years over which this evolution is extended. The chief aim of the occultist is therefore to so control himself as to be able to control his future states, and thereby gradually shorten the duration of his *Devachanic* states between his two incarnations. In his

progress, there comes a time when, between one physical death and his next re-birth, there is no *Devachan* but a kind of spiritual sleep, the shock of death, having, so to say, stunned him into a state of unconsciousness from which he gradually recovers to find himself reborn, to continue his purpose. The period of this sleep may vary from twenty-five to two hundred years, depending upon the degree of his advancement. But even this period may be said to be a waste of time, and hence all his exertions are directed to shorten its duration so as to gradually come to a point when the passage from one state of existence into another is almost imperceptible. This is his last incarnation, as it were, for the shock of death no more stuns him. This is the idea the writer of the article "The Elixir of Life" means to convey, when he says:—

"By or about the time when the Death-limit of his race is passed, HE IS ACTUALLY DEAD, in the ordinary sense, that is to say, that he has relieved himself of all or nearly all such material particles as would have necessitated in disruption the agony of dying. He has been dying gradually during the whole period of his Initiation. The catastrophe cannot happen twice over. He has only spread over a number of years the mild process of dissolution which others endure from a brief moment to a few hours. The highest Adept is, in fact, dead to, and absolutely unconscious of, the world; he is oblivious of its pleasures, careless of its miseries, in so far as sentimentalism goes, for the stern sense of DUTY never leaves him blind to its very existence. . . ."

The process of the emission and attraction of atoms, which the occultist controls, has been discussed at length in that article and in other writings. It is by these means that he gets rid gradually of all the old gross particles of his

body, substituting for them finer and more ethereal ones, till at last the former *sthula sarira* is completely dead and disintegrated and he lives in a body entirely of his own creation, suited to his work. That body is essential for his purpose, for, as the "Elixir of Life" says:—

"But to do good, as in everything else, a man *must* have time and materials to work with, and this is a necessary means to the acquirement of powers by which infinitely more good can be done than without them. When these are once mastered, the opportunities to use them will arrive. . . "

In another place, in giving the practical instructions for that purpose, the same article says:—

"The physical man must be rendered more ethereal and sensitive; the mental man more penetrating and profound; the moral man more self-denying and philosophical."

The above important considerations are lost sight of by those who snatch away from the context the following passage in the same article:—

"And from this account too, it will be perceptible how foolish it is for people to ask the Theosophist to procure for them communication with the highest Adepts. It is with the utmost difficulty that one or two can be induced, even by the throes of a world, to injure their own progress by meddling with mundane affairs. The ordinary reader will say: This is not *god-like*. This is the acme of selfishness. . . But let him realize that a very high Adept, undertaking to reform the world, would necessarily have to once more submit to Incarnation. And is the result of all that has gone before in that line sufficiently encouraging to prompt a renewal of the attempt? "

Now, in condemning the above passage as inculcating selfishness, super-

ficial readers and thinkers lose sight of various important considerations. In the first place, they forget the other extracts already quoted which impose *self-denial* as a necessary condition of success, and which say that, with progress, new senses and new powers are acquired with which infinitely more good can be done than without them. The more spiritual the Adept becomes, the less can he meddle with *mundane*, *gross* affairs and the more he has to confine himself to a spiritual work. It has been repeated, time out of number, that the work on a spiritual plane is as superior to the work on an intellectual plane as the one on the latter plane is superior to that on a physical plane. The very *high* Adepts, therefore, do help humanity, *but only spiritually*: they are constitutionally incapable of meddling with *worldly* affairs. But this applies only to very high Adepts. There are various degrees of Adeptship, and those of each degree work for humanity on the planes to which they may have risen. It is only the *chelas* that can live in the world, until they rise to a certain degree. And it is because the *Adepts do* care for the world that they make their *chelas* live in and work for it, as many of those who study the subject are aware. Each cycle produces its own occultists who will be able to work for the humanity of those times on all the different planes; but when the Adepts foresee that at a particular period the then humanity will be incapable of producing occultists for work on particular planes, for such occasions they do provide by either giving up voluntarily their further progress and waiting in those particular degrees until humanity reaches that period, or by refusing to enter into *Nirvana* and submitting to re-incarnation in time to reach those degrees when humanity will require their assistance at that stage. And although the world

may not be aware of the fact, yet there are even now certain Adepts who have preferred to remain *statu quo* and refuse to take the higher degrees, for the benefit of the future generations of humanity. In short, as the Adepts work harmoniously, since unity is the fundamental law of their being, they have as it were made a division of labour, according to which each works on the plane at the time allotted to him, for the spiritual elevation of us all—and the process of longevity mentioned in “The Elixir of Life” is only the means to the end which, far from being selfish, is the most unselfish purpose for which a human being can labour.

—*The Theosophist*, July, 1884.

THEOSOPHICAL STUDY AND WORK

The work of a Branch has two objective points where it is intended, in the theosophical order of things, that its help and influence are to be felt. The first is in and among its members, and the other upon that portion of the world which lies within its purview. If, as I firmly believe, the theory of universal brotherhood is based upon a law—a fact—in nature that all men are spiritual beings who are indissolubly linked and united together in one vast whole, then no Branch, no individual theosophist, can be regarded as without significance and influence, nor is any member justified in supposing that he or she is too obscure, too unprogressed, to be of any benefit to the movement and thus to mankind at large.

The fact that a branch T.S. is a body of individuals makes stronger the certainty that by means of the subtle link which, under the law of unity, connects together all the men who are on this planet, a wider and more potent influ-

ence for good or evil may be exerted through a Branch than through any single individual. For just as man is composed of atoms descended to him in various lines from many forefathers, all of which have a part in the influence he exerts, so a Branch is a being composed of the atoms—its members—included within its borders. And it is no fancy, no fantastic dream, to say that this being may be intelligent, or forceful, or weak, or wicked as a whole, just as it is made the one or the other by its component parts. . . . Not a single good example in theosophic life is lost, they [the adepts] say, but every one of us affects not only the immediate associates but also projects into the great universal current an influence that has its weight in the destiny of the race. Some of these golden words are as follows:—

“Let not the fruit of good karma be your motive; for your karma, good or bad, being one and the common property of all mankind, nothing good or bad can happen to you that is not shared by many others. Hence, if the motive be for yourself it is selfish and can only generate a double effect—good or bad—and will either nullify your good actions or turn them to some other man’s profit. There is no happiness for one who is ever thinking of self and forgetting otherselves.”

This is all applicable to a Branch in its totality, for it is an intelligent being quite as much under the government of karma as any individual. It will feel the karma of its actions, and the responsibility will rest upon the members who have neglected or obeyed the dictates of theosophic duty. And the karma of the entire international body will react upon it for benefit or the reverse, according to the good, bad or indifferent karma which the Branch may have acquired by its course of action. It is a part of the whole, and no portion can be exempt

from the influences belonging to the total mass of workers. . . Each Branch is separately responsible for its own actions and yet every one is helped or injured by every other. . . .

With this in view we may conclude that a single Branch has the power to efficiently aid and benefit not only its members but also the whole theosophic body corporate. . . .

Many persons, however, think that they can belong to the Society, and while negatively selfish, that is, ready and willing to sit down and hear others expound theosophical doctrine and never work for the body themselves, they may receive benefit in the way of comprehension of the doctrines of man and nature which are promulgated among us. But they forget a law in these matters of great importance, one, indeed, that they may not be willing to admit, and which is much opposed to our modern ideas of the powers and functions of the human mind. It is that such an attitude by reason of its selfishness builds up a hard wall between their minds and the very truths they wish to know. I speak of an actual dynamic effect which is as plain to the eye of the trained seer as is any object to the healthy eye. . . .

. . . the aims of the members of a Branch should be to eradicate selfishness and to promulgate and illustrate the doctrine of universal brotherhood, basing the explanation upon the actual unity of all beings.—*W. Q. Judge, The Heart Doctrine.*

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“From strength to strength, from the beauty and perfection of one plane to the greater beauty and perfection of another, with accessions of new glory, of fresh knowledge and power in each cycle, such is the destiny of every Ego, which thus becomes its own saviour in each world and incarnation.”

The Key to Theosophy.

“THE BHAGAVAD GITA EXPLAINED”

We were delighted to receive recently a copy of Professor E. Wood's latest book, *The Bhagavad Gita Explained*. This will be reviewed fully in an early issue, but in the meantime we hasten to bring this important book to the attention of our readers. In our view, Professor Wood has reached a new height of achievement in writing this invaluable aid to the study of the essential *Gita* teachings. Included therein is a new translation from the Sanskrit of those teachings. The translation itself throws light on difficult passages and Professor Wood's lucid and careful commentaries convey a clear understanding of the doctrines.

The 232 page book is bound in paper, which doubtless helped to fix the price at the low sum of \$1.50. The Toronto Lodge will carry a stock of the books.

THE THREE TRUTHS

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

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

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

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