

THE CANADIAN THEOSOPHIST

VOL. 53, No. 4

TORONTO, SEPT.-OCT., 1972

Price 50 Cents

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THAT HALLOWEEN PIRATE

A bold bad "pirate" just entered my room,
Pressed searching lips to mine in the gloom.
Not a word was said by this "pirate" bold,
Whose lips were scarcely two years old.
Just a sigh came from them—a wordless prayer
Arresting my pain, yet he seemed unaware
Of the healing power of his fresh young face
And that SELFLESS gift of his fond embrace.
Of all the cures tried to free me from pain
Not one came near to its vast domain
As his tiny hands clasped my aching neck
That spinal arthritis did its best to wreck.
That SELFLESS giving, the soft tender sigh
Was all he possessed—that dear little boy—
To make of my bed an altar of grace
To thrust out pain—put ease in its place.
O Nirmanakayas watching this corridor grim,
Did you whisper the words that sent "Dean" in?

—Charles R. Carter

THEOSOPHY—AN ANALYSIS

GEOFFREY FARTHING

Geoffrey Farthing, former General Secretary of The Theosophical Society in England, will visit a number of Canadian centres in November. He is no stranger to our readers, and his articles published in earlier issues of this magazine were well received. These included: "Brotherhood" (Sept.-Oct. 1969); "Service" (Jan.-Feb. 1970); "What Is The Theosophical Society?" and "What More Could We Want?" (July-Aug. 1970); and "A New Look At Reunion" (Jan.-Feb. 1971). He is also author of two Theosophical books: Theosophy—What's It All About? and When We Die . . .

Because it seemed to me that the views of both the public and of many members of the Society were confused on the nature and Objects of the Society, in an article published in The Theosophist and in the Theosophical Journal I tried to clarify these views by making some definite statements as to what the Society was not and then putting forward some ideas on what it was or was supposed to be. This analysis seems to have been acceptable and helpful. It now seems to me that a similar attempt is even more necessary for Theosophy itself.

First let us see what Theosophy is not.

It is not a religion as such; certainly not one derived from any other or others.

It is not a spiritualistic nor psychic cult; It is not a dogma, creed nor sect; it was not made up or invented by anyone.

It is not a speculative philosophy; not a concoction from or of any schools of philosophy.

It is not a system of necromancy, divination, nor any of the ceremonial magic arts, certainly not of the black variety.

It is not a system of thought nor a specific set of ideas.

It is not a matter of opinion, belief nor concept, neither yours, mine nor anyone else's.

It is not a means of self-aggrandisement nor of satisfying personal wants, ambitions nor cravings, nor even of personal needs.

It is not anything deliberately kept secret, it is not withheld from anyone capable of apprehending it.

It is not incompatible with any fact or truth in nature, nor with anything moral, decent, kind or helpful, nor with anything sane and reasonable.

Within the Society, which in its objects let it be remembered does not mention Theosophy, there are widely divergent and strongly held views about it. These are broadly in four categories.

First, there are those who have no views. The Objects of the Society appeal to them for one reason or another but they do no study of a "theosophical" nature, are not interested in it as a subject. They therefore have but vague ideas about it.

Second, there are those who feel Theosophy to be nothing specific in itself, that anyone has a right to declare a theosophical point of view or tenet quite unsupported by any other than his own opinion on the matter. These are often those who claim that Theosophy has never been defined.

Third, there are those who feel Theosophy to be something specific but that it must be entirely related to a man's own individual insight. The members of this group are those who cannot tolerate any idea of authority or teaching in this matter. They are completely confident that the material given us in books is otherwise available to them through their own direct, unaided, inner sight and that this is the only proper channel of knowing. Paradoxically this group is composed largely of earnest students of "theosophical" technical literature. Amongst them however are those who would say that the literature cannot be relied on. They say

we do not know that it is genuine or that it has not been tampered with.

Fourthly, there are those, who whilst agreeing broadly with the principles of individual freedom and trusting to their own intuitions, nevertheless study. As a result of this study, they maintain that Theosophy is something quite specific in its own right. Some of these students would maintain that authentic information about it is contained, with possible minor exceptions,—only in the works of H. P. Blavatsky. They justify this view on the inherent quality of that literature and the “authority” of its initiate author or authors.

Because of the freedoms in our Society, it is obviously difficult to discuss a subject so controversial as this, without the risk of appearing to argue against someone’s point of view but it is felt that Theosophy is an important enough subject for us to risk this in order to see if we can establish something definite about it.

What then is Theosophy?

The word *sophia* from which Theosophy is partly derived means, in the old Greek, wisdom or divine wisdom. The *theos* part is again an old Greek word, having to do with divinity. The Latin *deus*, god, comes from the same original stem. There are various meanings given to the two words combined. That used by H. P. Blavatsky in her early literature after the modern theosophical movement was founded, was “Divine Wisdom such as that possessed by the Gods”. The name comes to us, she says, from some Alexandrian philosophers calling themselves lovers of truth. She says the word was used in the third century by some people calling themselves “Analogeticists”, because of the practice of interpreting all sacred legends and narratives, myths and mysteries by a rule or principle of analogy and correspondence, so that events which were related as having occurred in the external world were regarded as expressing operations and experiences of the human soul.

So Theosophy is knowledge (*sophia*) not belief nor opinion. But before we have the knowledge, on our hearing about it we either believe or we do not. To this extent Theosophy can be regarded as a matter of belief for us.

In describing an early theosophical system of training requiring certain beliefs and practices, H.P.B. says “by returning to one’s pristine purity of nature, man could move the Gods (personified forces in nature) to impart to him Divine Mysteries”. This practice she calls Theurgy or divine wisdom. The beliefs required of the would-be practitioner were similar to, but shorter than, the three fundamental propositions of Theosophy given in the Proem to *The Secret Doctrine*.

Theosophy then has to do with the “operations and experiences of the human soul”. It rests on some fundamental data. It leads to a revelation, by direct experience, of certain mysteries and it eventually endows its devotee with power to perform “divine work”. So Theosophy is knowledge and a knowledge gained through certain soul experiences. It is therefore something quite definite and in the right conditions provable empirically. To that extent it is fact.

Theosophy is . . .

Deducing from this power-producing aspect of Theosophy, we can say that:

- it is knowledge of the powers and qualities of nature;
- it is knowledge of universal law and of the laws of nature at all levels of being, the physical, psychic, mental, supermental and spiritual;
- it is knowledge of the inner, and outer forces, powers and energies and of the varieties of substance and life forms in the Universe (macrocosm) and Man (microcosm);
- it is knowledge of the various modes of consciousness, actually and potentially, available to man and all creatures;
- it is knowledge of the origins, principles and processes of existence;

it is knowledge of all that comprises man in his active, feeling and thinking being and living.

Theosophy is also referred to as the Wisdom-Religion. H.P.B. says "All the old worships indicate the existence of a single Theosophy anterior to them . . ." And again "The Wisdom-Religion was ever one and the same, and *being the last word of possible human knowledge* (my italics, G.A.F.) was therefore carefully preserved . . . amongst Initiates of every country; among profound seekers after truth, their disciples . . .". In another place in *The Key to Theosophy* it is referred to as "superhuman Knowledge" obtainable by "metaphysical and alchemical processes".

To become possessed of Theosophy even in part it is necessary to become an initiate in some degree. This should be borne in mind when we, as student seekers, claim "to know". We should remember this too when choosing our literature. We are told that the founding of the modern Theosophical Society was at the instigation of two such initiates. We are told that a number of these initiates was involved in the compilation and writing of *Isis Unveiled* and that H.P.B. herself, acting as amanuensis, was also an initiate. We learn that *The Secret Doctrine* was the work of H.P.B. in collaboration with two such high initiates. Now all this is very significant when dealing with Theosophy, as a subject, with the meanings given above to that word. It is very obviously not a subject of the ordinary kind that can just be learned. Powers or faculties of the soul have to be developed and just as importantly we have, in some realistic not fanciful way, to appreciate what an initiate is. If we are honest we must admit our ignorance in this as in so many things theosophical.

Much, very much, information, is given us in those two classics concerning the nature, the inner nature, of the universe and its laws and processes. We are given an insight into the constitution of the universe and man, and also into the origins and

nature of matter, energy and space. From an intellectual point of view this involves us in metaphysics, in ideas and concepts very difficult to comprehend. It is in this connection that H.P.B. warns us not to ask our fellow students, albeit apparently more advanced, for the meaning of passages in the S.D. All we will get she says, is their *opinion*. This is not the reality. To this extent then, Theosophy when dealt with intellectually is a matter of opinion—but let us remember that Theosophy as such, as knowledge, can never be just opinion.

Now, if Theosophy is knowledge, the subject is literally infinite. Any presentation of it however must be finite. This does not detract from the value of an informed or properly inspired exposition. But it does mean that the authorship of the literature is important.

This raises the matter of "authority" in theosophical matters. We have been at pains to show that Theosophy is a matter of "operations and experiences of the human soul". These must obviously be individual. But enlightenment into the mysteries of nature comes slowly. Spiritual and even psychic growth is a process of nature and takes time. The expositions of Theosophy given us in *Isis* and the S.D. cover a range of knowledge that we would be exceedingly unlikely to become possessed of even after many lifetimes of effort by our own unaided direct insight. Are we therefore to be denied any knowledge of it, or first hand insight into it, at all? It seems the Masters thought otherwise and they made available the literature we have. This failure to grant or even appreciate this kind of "authority" in our original literature has been a cause of great confusion in many particulars of intellectual Theosophy. The Masters made a point of telling us that no uninitiated seer, from Swedenborg (amongst others) downwards, could see quite truly.

One great difficulty in dealing with Theosophy in our Society is that belief in Masters is not required or expected. In this case they cannot be quoted as "authority" but Theo-

sophy, as we are now claiming it, and Masters of it, are inseparable; one is inherent in the other. This becomes undeniably apparent as the nature of universal law, with its evolutionary aspect, is seen and understood.

Now, if we grant the reality of Masters, for the purpose of seeing what Theosophy is, and we grant that they are initiates, we must grant that they knew what they were about in the making available of some of their knowledge to us, and *in the way they did it*. Isis and the S.D. are often criticised for many reasons. They are too difficult. Their essential message is too obscure. They contain seeming contradictions. The material is badly presented, even disorderly. They do not respect the established order of orthodoxy in science or, and especially, religion and spiritualism. They are obviously not comprehensible by the not-so-bright. It is hard work to read them. They have certainly been bypassed by generations of recent theosophical students and their content, Theosophy, is I suggest, virtually unknown to the majority of our members. In saying this it must not be forgotten that it is not encumbent on any member of the Society to study Theosophy. We are here speaking only for those interested in it.

So, summarising, what is Theosophy? It is knowledge, knowledge ultimately derived from the "operations and experiences of the human soul". Before we reach that knowledge however, we have available to us what we might call "Theosophical Information", necessarily incomplete and possibly in some detail inaccurate, but of very great extent and depth, in our early classical literature. For these and the reasons given above, later expositions, simplified versions, cannot, to the same extent, be regarded as

Theosophy, even though to beginners they may be helpful. Any claimed "additional" later information should be accepted with the necessary reservations and perhaps even suspicion when it contradicts the main principles of the initiate inspired literature.

The Necessary Keys

The world has had esoteric literature since before 1875 but it has been cryptic, associated with or deriving from secret bodies, and it is not, for the most part, comprehensible without keys not available to the general public. Our basic theosophical literature provides some of these keys. There has also been a copious and in some instances splendid mystical and devotional literature for many centuries before 1875 but this did not provide us with the explanations which are in our literature. Any information as to origins, the nature of existence and so on is largely allegorical or symbolic and is meaningless to the layman without the necessary keys. Theosophical literature again provides some of those keys.

Theosophy acts as a yardstick to the pronouncements of the speculative (but uninitiated) philosophers of ancient and modern times. They are legion and credit is due to many of them for their unaided intuition-al glimpses into truth. But surely we should be careful about accepting these glimpses, in isolation, as theosophical data, as some of our members seem prone to do.

Now all through this paper, reference is made to the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and the strong inference drawn is that they, together with other material received from the Masters through her, and only they, constitute the authentic revelation of Theosophy in our time. This inference will be much resented by some members of the Society, and we shall be accused of dogmatising Theosophy, but knowledge of facts, which it is claimed here is what Theosophy is, cannot be dogma. Dogma is teaching to be believed based on unprovable concepts, theoretical and in our case even theological.

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“Back to Blavatsky” has become a derisive taunt. Such an expression could only be uttered seriously by those fundamentally ignorant of what, through her agency, the Masters gave us. It is like electrical engineers taunting each other with going back to Faraday or, atomic scientists back to Planck or Rutherford, or mathematicians back to Newton or Einstein. There is no such thing in matters of knowledge as going back to anyone. If we wish to know, we avail ourselves of what facts have been given us and we make what use of them we will . . . or can.

At the present time there is a tendency to charge students of Theosophy as here defined with sectarianism. No such charge is made against the followers of, or sympathisers with, say, Krishnamurti, Shankaracharya, Patanjali, or Leadbeater, whose followers are probably the majority of members of the Society. It is worth considering deeply why this sectarian charge should be made in the case of H.P.B.

One last point, Theosophy is obviously for him, and him only, who will strive strenuously and devotedly after it. To begin with it means prolonged and serious study, a learning to think, and think hard and deeply. Other qualities such as open-mindedness and humility are *sine qua non*.

In order seemingly to avoid work or too much effort in unaccustomed directions, some members will justify themselves by saying that intellect is not all, there are other worthwhile human faculties of love, devotion, a willingness to serve and so on. But a Theosophist must have these *and* his knowledge. In any case his knowledge would beget them. Theosophy is a way of life, they say. It most certainly is but it is a way of life dictated by an awakened inmost conscience, not a set of rules imposed from outside nor by sentimentality. There is a world of difference here not easily explained but one has to do with the “operations of the soul” and the other with the mind and emotions. The earnest aspirant is bent on getting his soul operating, not learning

precepts, although in the early stages he must regard these as his only guide.

Theosophy is not only a way of life, it is, in all important respects, life itself, because the Knower, the Knowing and the Knowledge are one . . . at the core of life and being. Let us become possessed of that life and we shall KNOW.

Many reading this article will no doubt want to say, “But all that is *ONLY* his opinion”. It was however shared by a late but illustrious member of our Society, Dr. Annie Besant. She wrote in 1891: “Now by Theosophy I mean the ‘Wisdom Religion,’ or the ‘Secret Doctrine’, and *our only knowledge of the Wisdom Religion at the present time comes to us from the Messenger of its Custodians, H. P. Blavatsky*. Knowing what she taught, we can recognise fragments of the same teachings in other writings, but her message remains for us the test of Theosophy everywhere. As we learn, we verify some of its more elementary portions, and so—if need be—we may increase our confidence in the Messenger . . . (as we study) we may disagree with the teaching, but it remains ‘the Secret Doctrine’, or Theosophy; she always encouraged independent thought and criticism, and never resented differences of opinion, but she never wavered in the distinct proclamation ‘The Secret Doctrine IS’ . . .” (my italics. G.A.F.)

—*The Theosophical Journal*, Jan-Feb 1972

Theosophy is complicated only to those who have not penetrated beyond the frontiers of the teaching as it is given in the exoteric books. But with the study of it comes a realization that its complexity so called is really its profundity; that you never can reach an ultimate in its study, for there is always something more to learn, something more to see, and to find; and that the seeing and finding will come to you as you grow in understanding of it.

—G. de Purucker

THE FIGHTING SPIRIT

A. N. FORTAS

In spite of its title, nothing in this paper should annoy any sincere pacifist. In fact, the most peaceful and peace-loving people in history appear to have exhibited the fighting spirit. Most avowed pacifists seem already to have learned the lesson, and are exemplary. There is no contradiction in terms: generally speaking, theirs is no company for cowards.

To a person who is passive rather than pacific, however, these thoughts may not be received in good grace. To those who habitually take the line of least resistance the ideas to be presented will be distasteful and unacceptable. They are not perturbed—if indeed they are even aware—that the line of least resistance is a circle which leads them nowhere. They are certain not to like what they read, unless they are beginning to harbour doubts about their attitude towards life. In that case they can take courage because the very will to develop the fighting spirit carries with it instantaneous benefits.

This is not a sermon, but it does contain a religious message. It is based on an idea that is fundamental to Theosophy (although many Theosophists, like others who have been exposed to it, prefer to turn a blind eye). It is a message that is to be found in the scriptures and teachings of many religions.

It might fairly be observed that one of the basic concepts of any religion embraces universal love and brotherhood. With this in mind a student of comparative religion is often struck by a paradox. Why would a divine personage preach brotherhood, yet in his teachings also use images of wars and battles, and exhort his followers to gird for battle?

This is a troublesome paradox. Yet in the world's scriptures can be found many examples. The symbol of the sword is used more frequently than that of the olive

branch. The very fact that this paradox is so common suggests that it is worth more than just casual attention. Any idea, or group of ideas, that have been iterated by the most respected teachers of all ages and who lived in widespread lands—these surely are worth studying.

Let there be no misunderstanding: to talk about the fighting spirit is not to advocate belligerency, nor does it imply the justification of wars or cruelty on the worldly level. Essentially it is an attempt to portray through metaphor an idea that cannot be brought out in plain terms—our language is so deficient when it is wanted to describe things of the spirit.

A sensible person will realize that belligerency, cruelty and war are all about him, especially in the particular cycle we happen to be living in, and he will strike his own attitudes and make his own decisions about these facts of life when it is necessary for him to do so. The pattern of our daily round is constantly challenging us to enter battle in the figurative sense and the battlefield might be anywhere—home, school, office or factory. But when we talk about the *fighting spirit*, we can say with Paul,

... we wrestle not with flesh and blood
...—*Ephesians*, vi 12

and still recognize that flesh and blood have to be taken into account, because these also are facts of life.

* * *

The modern presentation of Theosophy is, in one of its aspects, an attempt to synthesize the truths to be found in all the great religious systems. One of these truths, which goes to the very heart and meaning of religion, concerns man's spiritual evolution. Hints about this pilgrimage are found scattered through the world's scriptures. It is helpful, almost essential, to compare them, for there are problems in trying to use a single scripture as a guide.

One by itself often gives but a dim light with which to illuminate the path. A reason for this is the deficiency of language, already noted. Another is that the truths concerning man's spiritual heritage for the most part have been regarded as part of a secret philosophy which could not be imparted to the masses. "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," said Jesus to his disciples, "but to them it is not given." (*Matthew*, xiii, 11)

Hence, any one book of religious teachings is likely to contain no more than a superficial or veiled reference to the quest. It is frustrating, especially to those who think knowledge can be purchased, or served up like pabulum. The student who really wants to know will make the necessary efforts, and one of them will probably require difficult and time-consuming comparative study. If he is willing to undertake the work required, he will find *The Secret Doctrine* useful because it is a synthesis of knowledge culled from many sources, including most of the scriptures.

That particular student might conclude that man is a spiritual creature and potentially divine. ("Have I not said ye shall be as gods?" asked Jesus; "Look within, thou art Buddha," said Gautama.) Also, if he delves deeper he will be challenged with the implication that it is necessary, as part of his divine growth, for man to partake in experiences on lower, or grosser planes, than the spiritual. Such experiences, he might gather, are possible only when he is incarnated in a human body. If this be so, it is logical to assume that the experiences required by a potentially omniscient and omnipotent being could hardly be obtained in a single lifetime. Therefore, in Theosophy and in most scriptures (though in the latter not always at the surface) may be found the idea that a large number of incarnations are necessary for this evolution.

The important point is that man is a duality and his growth requires the interaction of both parts. Until there is an uplifting of his animal nature the divinity re-

mains latent, but this requires a definite and deliberate effort on the part of his higher self. The interaction is often analogously depicted in the ancient teachings in fighting terms. Hence, the fighting spirit suggests the power by which spiritual evolution is achieved.

Let it be said emphatically: this growth without effort is impossible. There will always be some in our midst who will try to tell us otherwise, and there will always be plenty who are only too willing to believe them, but it is out of the question. Man's spiritual growth is as dependent upon this effort—this warlike attitude—as is the growth of a plant upon soil and moisture.

They fail, and they alone, who have not striven.—Thomas Bailey Aldrich

* * *

The lesson is stated unequivocally in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Of all the great scriptures in our possession, the *Gita* is at once the most simple and the most profound. While it is impossible to describe this great work in a line—indeed, there exist libraries of commentaries on it which combined fail to do it justice—at least it can be said to be, in one of its aspects, a dissertation extolling the virtues of a fighting spirit.

This age-old gem of wisdom, the *Gita*, was cleverly inserted into the Hindu classic war epic, the *Mahabharata*, in such a way that it is an integral part of the epic, but at the same time can be considered by itself without preface or addition. In spite of its colourful surroundings, the *Bhagavad-Gita* is the every essence of Divine Wisdom. Unlike other scriptures that have meant many things to many people over the centuries, this one, perhaps because it goes so directly to the heart of human problems, has been consistently meaningful generation after generation in India. Introduced to the west less than two hundred years ago, it has won respect far and wide.

The setting of the *Gita* is a battlefield. At the point in the story of the *Mahabharata* where the *Gita* begins, we meet Arjuna, a royal prince, who has been obliged to go

to war for the sake of his late father's throne. The enemy consists of his cousins and other relatives who have usurped the throne.

The scriptural poem opens with Arjuna examining his own motives with regard to the family quarrel. As he sits in his chariot he expresses his doubts and fears; he grows despondent when he thinks of the carnage that must inevitably be a result of the war, regardless of who was victor, and of the cutting down in their prime of many of his loved ones on both sides. He appeals to the Divine Krishna for counsel. Krishna proceeds to show the prince, in a series of discourses, wherein lies his duty.

It is important to know the nature of the two principal characters of this episode. While the poem can be read with pleasure at almost any level of understanding—even literal—it is generally conceded that Arjuna and Krishna represent two levels of spirituality. Arjuna, who was divinely born, is often regarded as depicting the human soul, while Krishna is the Divine Soul. A learned Brahmin student of Theosophy, T. Subba Rao, suggested they were the human monad and logos respectively. It is important that we understand what is meant by these words, and above all that we do not anthropomorphize them. Those not familiar with this terminology might wish to look on Arjuna as being that permanent element in our make-up—that which exists before and after the body, and which is the repository of all our individual characteristics. Krishna, the Divine Principle, is more difficult to conceive; in fact, with the limitations of our faculties so exalted a principle can hardly be conjectured. Perhaps if we think of Krishna as being beyond the furthest reaches of what we call divine he will still be in truer perspective than if we attempted to personify him in any way.

Arjuna's despondency at the thought of war is at once answered by Krishna who dares the prince to take hold of himself:

How hath this weakness taken thee?
Whence springs

The inglorious trouble, shameful to the
brave,

Barring the path of virtue? Nay, Arjun!
Forbid thyself to feebleness! It mars
Thy warrior name! Cast off the coward-
fit!

Wake! Be thyself! Arise, scourge of thy
foes!

—*Bhagavad-Gita* II, 3 (Sir Edwin Arnold's translation, *The Song Celestial*.)

But Arjuna still resists the thought of drawing blood of those he loves. Again, this can be read in many ways, but on one level it has been suggested that this is poetic imagery for his love of earthly desires and passions. After dealing with this objection in words that plainly spell out the doctrine of reincarnation, Krishna goes on to explain why it is important for the aspiring pilgrim to fight:

I say to thee weapons reach not the Life;
Flame burns it not, waters cannot o'er-
whelm,

Nor dry winds wither it . . .

—*ibid.* II, 23

Nought better can betide a martial soul
Than lawful war; happy the warrior
To whom comes joy of battle . . .

—*ibid.* II, 31, 32

Therefore, arise, thou Son of Kunti!
brace

Thine arm for conflict, nerve thy heart
to meet—

As things alike to thee—pleasure or pain,
Profit or ruin, victory or defeat:

So minded, gird thee to the fight, for so
Thou shalt not sin!

—*ibid.* II, 37, 38

Again and again Krishna returns to this theme, spelling out his advice in unequivocal terms to the hesitant Arjuna. Finally, at the end of the poem, the alternative is dismissed brusquely:

If this day thou say'st

Relying on thyself, "I will not fight!"

Vain will thy purpose prove!

—*ibid.* XVIII, 59

Thus the message of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. We are all Arjunas, and we all stand

on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, and we are all faced with the necessity to make decisions influenced, on the one hand, by the knowledge (conscious or otherwise) of our duties, and on the other by our many desires and indolent habits. It marks a turning point when we can ask ourselves in all honesty if our fighting spirit is activated as the divine exhortation of the *Gita* demands.

* * *

An identical message may be discovered, in different words, but in similar images, in many scriptures. *The Voice of the Silence*, H. P. Blavatsky's rendering of some rare Buddhist teachings, tells us:

The path that leadeth on, is lighted by one fire—the light of daring, burning in the heart. The more one dares, the more he shall obtain.—p. 54 (original edition)

In this slim volume is repeated several times the necessity for the disciple who would aspire to his divinity to overcome his natural fears and to join the fight. He is warned that should he lose a battle he must return again to the fray, and keep on returning if need be, until at last the enemy is crushed. As in parallel writings, *The Voice of the Silence* encourages us to repeat our efforts, to try, try again and not be disheartened by temporary defeats:

If thou has tried and failed, O dauntless fighter, yet lose not courage: fight on and to the charge return again, and yet again.

The fearless warrior, his precious life-blood oozing from his wide and gaping wounds, will still attack the foe, drive him from out his stronghold, vanquish him, ere he himself expires. Act then, all ye who fail and suffer, act like him; and from the stronghold of your Soul, chase all your foes away—ambition, anger, hatred, e'en to the shadow of desire—when even you have failed.

Remember, thou that fightest for man's liberation, each failure is success, and each sincere attempt wins its reward in time.—*ibid.* p. 63

What more encouragement does the aspirant need than the knowledge that "... each failure is success, each sincere attempt wins its reward in time"?

Our understanding of the fighting spirit is enhanced by some seemingly enigmatic passages in that other fine spiritual handbook, *Light on the Path*:

Stand aside in the coming battle, and though thou fightest be not thou the warrior.

Look for the warrior and let him fight in thee.

Take his orders for battle and obey them. Obey him not as though he were a general, but as though he were thyself . . .

Look for him, else in the fever and hurry of the fight thou mayest pass him; and he will not know thee unless thou knowest him . . . When once he has entered thee and become thy warrior, he will never utterly desert thee, and at the day of the great peace he will become one with thee.

Later on we are given an idea of the long war ahead: "The great and difficult victory . . . is a work of ages."

There is no shortage of scriptures to quote. In the *Dhammapada* it is written:

If a man were to conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and another conquer one, himself, he indeed is the greatest of conquerors.—VIII, 4

Many of us brought up in one or other of the Christian churches probably remember the stirring old hymn, "Fight the Good Fight". The opening words of this hymn come from Paul's letter to Timothy in which he admonishes him to

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called . . .—I *Timothy* vi, 12

"... whereunto thou art also called"—the imperative of spiritual evolution. Paul himself evidently recognized the aptness of the fighting metaphor as a means to express the way of life he believed in, was follow-

(Continued on page 90)

NOTES AND COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Death took toll of a number of our older members this summer. I regret to report the following.

Miss Mabel Carr died in Hamilton on July 11. She was in her 88th year. Miss Carr was a member of long standing, having joined the Society in 1916 and became a charter member of Hamilton Lodge when it was founded in 1917. As a matter of interest, it happened that hers was the first name to be recorded on the rolls of the Canadian Section when it was formed in 1919: her number was C 1.

None who knew Mabel Carr could fail to be impressed by her devotion to Theosophy and to the Theosophical Society. She radiated peace but possessed a strength of character that was an inspiration to her fellow members. Until age and infirmity prevented it, she always took an active part in Lodge affairs. For many years she acted as Secretary for Hamilton Lodge.

A member of the Toronto Lodge, Mrs. Reta Hoad, died on July 28. She had been ill for some time. Mrs. Hoad joined the Society in 1954 and in earlier years had been active in Lodge affairs.

A member of Edmonton Lodge who joined the Society in 1944, Mrs. Madeline Morrison, died in July after a long illness.

To the families and friends of these deceased members we send our sympathies.

* * *

I am delighted to announce that Geoffrey Farthing, former General Secretary of the T.S. in England, will tour Canadian Lodges in early November. He will visit Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, Toronto and Hamilton. At the time of going to press it is not possible to give details, which, however, will be available from the local Lodges for those who are interested.

* * *

Following Rex Dutta's visit to Canada a number of students have expressed interest in the method of study he demonstrated

briefly in several centres. In addition to subscribing to his group's magazine, *Viewpoint Aquarius*, they may now also purchase tape recordings of an actual study class on the S.D. Proem. A minimum donation of £1.50 is required for a tape and postage is 10 p. For more information regarding V.A. or the tape offer, write to Mr. Dutta, c/o Fish Tanks Ltd., 49 Blandford Street, London W.1, England.

* * *

Mrs. Barbara Jackson of H.P.B. Lodge and long the President of the Toronto Vegetarian Association, has sent me a timely reminder of World Animal Day, which is celebrated on October 4. Since its inception the idea has spread to nearly every large country in the world. Its aims are: to direct attention to the great cruelties inflicted on animals everywhere; to focus thought on the speediest means of abolishing these wrongs; to inspire action on behalf of all suffering animals wherever they may be.

* * *

The General Executive of the T.S. in Canada met on July 26. The General Secretary was in the Chair with the following members present: Miss M. E. Seaton, Messrs. G. F. Gardiner, W. C. Schmitt, C. Weaver and R. A. Webb.

Business discussed included the distribution of bound copies of *The Canadian Theosophist* to university libraries; appointment of auditor; 1972 North American Theosophical Students' Conference; distribution of Centennial brochure, "In The Footsteps of the Founders"; reports on Rex Dutta's Canadian tour and the General Secretary's visit to Western Lodges.

It was authorized that the Section sponsor a Canadian tour in November by Mr. Geoffrey Farthing, former General Secretary of the T.S. in England. The purchase by the Section of the new film, "Reincarnation", from the T.S. in America, was also confirmed.

* * *

Details of the 1972 North American Theosophical Students' Conference are given

THE CANADIAN THEOSOPHIST
IN CANADA

Published Bi-Monthly

Second Class Mail Registration Number 0784

Return Postage Guaranteed

Subscription: THREE DOLLARS A YEAR



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All letters to the Editors, articles and reports for publication should be addressed to the Editors, Box 5051, Postal Station "A", Toronto 1, Ont.

Editors: Mr. and Mrs. T. G. Davy

Letters intended for publication should be restricted to not more than five hundred words.

The editors reserve the right to shorten any letter unless the writer states that it must be published in full or not at all.

RANNIE PUBLICATIONS LIMITED
Beamsville, Ont.

elsewhere in this issue. I hope that as many students as possible will attend. The facilities at "Olcott", headquarters of the T.S. in America, could hardly be better for the purpose of our conference study of "The Roots of Theosophy".

If you have not yet registered I urge you to do so right away so that adequate arrangements may be made by our hosts. Hope to see you there!

* * *

Requests for the following books have been received from members: *Five Years of Theosophy*; *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*; *I say Sunrise*, by Talbot Mundy.

Readers owning these books and wishing to dispose of them are asked to get in touch with me stating the price required.

* * *

I have much pleasure in welcoming the following new members into the fellowship of the Society:

Atma Vidya Lodge. Marie-Luise Gramms. *Members-at-large*. Robert W. Holmstrom, Percy J. D. Starkey.
Toronto Lodge. Lindsay E. Wakelin.

—T.G.D.

MONTREAL LODGE

Montreal Lodge will re-open on Tuesday, September 12 at 8.15 p.m. It is hoped that enquirers who attended the study sessions during the month of June will continue to visit the Lodge in the Fall.

With the intense heat and humidity experienced in Montreal during July and August, and the lack of air conditioning in the Lodge Room, it would be well nigh impossible to hold meetings during these months. However, the Librarian has been in attendance once a week so that visitors might avail themselves of the facilities of the Library.

Study of *The Secret Doctrine* will continue in the Fall and public meetings will be held each week. The Lodge members are looking forward to a visit from Mr. Geoffrey Farthing in November.

How sad to say "Farewell" to Summer—but to treat each day as the best day of our lives is the lesson to be learnt. Perhaps then we will become truly "Aware" at each moment of existence of the "Oneness of All".

Viola P. Law
Secretary

A SOUNDLY BASED LIFE

MONTAGUE A. MACHELL

Much of life's frustration and heartache may be rationally attributed to an almost universal uncertainty as to the nature and purpose of life on earth. Given such deep-rooted doubt, what chance has an earthly mortal to intelligently pattern his life on a dependable design?

The rewarding fruitfulness of life for a Theosophist is rooted in an awareness that life is a *spiritual* experience, governed by *spiritual Law*. To the degree that this conviction becomes the basis of his living, there-in *identical* with the basic Law of Life, he lives confidently, fearlessly and joyously. Having made this basic pattern his own, the outcome of all his efforts tend to be basically sound and rewarding. To the extent that the Law of Life has his undivided dedication, his living is blessed by the harmonious manifestation of Absolute Law. Personal experience proves that the resulting basic beneficence is experienced in even the smallest undertakings of daily living. Adequately revered, the Universal Law *can be depended upon*, down to life's most insignificant detail. Under its influence Life is Joy! But for this point of view to prevail, life must mean more than merely "my life". The seeker must be capable of concern for humanity in its entirety. The Universal must find a place in the overall picture.

In the life of a Theosophist "worry" is unjustifiable; it is for him to love the Law, and let the Spiritual Pattern unfold—a pattern of ever-expanding fulfilment. As Divine Law blends ever more perfectly with personal planning, *for others*, the awareness of Divine Guidance and protection becomes all-pervading. Similarly, the disciple becomes more and more inspired and illuminated with the beauty of the Unfolding Pattern. He "rests in the Law", which, in its turn, imparts ever larger and deeper significance to his smallest thought and act. With sublime indifference to the prophecies

of social, economical and political pundits, he relies upon the Larger Pattern to shape his conduct and destinies, knowing that its beneficence can ameliorate to a degree, at least, his most dire trials and catastrophies, insofar as that beneficence can discover channels for its manifestation, which it is his responsibility to keep open.

The proof of a soundly based life is found in a man's capacity to shape all his days, both in occupation and leisure interests, according to a perspective afforded by a genuinely spiritual point of view. This means making spiritual unfoldment the actual "business" of life, in which the most detailed thoughts and actions reveal a motivation related to the inner, rather than the outer life. The importance of these new relations is in the fact that they are *basic* to inner living, and hence capable of inviting *basic* situations and circumstances. In that these pertain to both man and his universe, they are imbued with more than a merely personal potential. To the extent that a man's heart beats synchronously with the heart of his universe, he relates living to a cosmic pattern. Earthly fame, earthly profits, personal gratifications—all these become relative to the sublime pattern of spiritual fulfilment—a realization of the destiny of the human race—a fulfilment demanding that inner meditation be centered on The One, regarding which newscasts, periodicals, magazines and T.V. remain abysmally ignorant. The soundly based life is, first and last, a Spiritual Life, *au naturel*.

Synchronizing one's life with a cosmic heartbeat is a powerful antidote to the passions and fevers of superficial living. The achievement of such sychronization can reveal the fallacy of today's speed mania since it reminds one that the heartbeat of spiritual growth has a long, majestic rhythm that is time-proof. "He who lives in the eternal, transcends time." Soundly based living rejects complete involvement in time, main-

taining a constant Margin of Eternity. "Never the Spirit was born; the Spirit shall cease to be never." Unfoldment fills that inner rhythm through hours and days, like as the Lotus slowly unfolds to glorify the mud from which it sprang. In the unfoldment of a soundly based life, man little by little transcends the squalor, heartache and agony in which he finds himself steeped here on earth.

A human life, being the expression of digested experience that has passed through mind and senses and become innate in the character, reminds us that merely "knowing" a truth with the mind is not enough. That truth has to be experienced many times. A human life is an expression of all that a person *is*; extension or modification of that life means "becoming" more than, or other than, one is. The fruit of experience must be either absorbed and *used*, or discarded as useless. Absorption occurs on many planes: on that of mind simply, on that of sense simply, on that of emotion, on that of the Inmost Self, wherein it may be assimilated and ingested as "character".

As an example, the ideal of Universal Brotherhood is a noble and beneficent ideal. It becomes basic when it has passed through mind, senses, emotions, and found a place in the Inmost Self. Having reached the latter, it has a chance of basically affecting the life, so far as the Inmost Self is in command of the life. In this passage the ideal of Universal Brotherhood passes from a thought, a feeling, a sentiment, to a life drive, at which point it positively influences one's thinking, awareness, emotions and most fundamental aspirations. Only to the degree that it affects the latter potently can it be deemed basic. Herein we are reminded of the demands made upon a man who would accept completely a great spiritual ideal, demands so serious that his meditation upon it shall modify thought, feeling, emotion and motivation, becoming, for each of these, a dominant "drive" in the life.

Acceptance of the ideal of Universal Brotherhood, on this scale, is equivalent to

saying, "In my love of mankind, *I am taking on the Universe!*—not just Tom, Dick and Harry, but Erasmus, Luther, Socrates, Mars, Venus, Mercury, this planet, Atlantis, Lemuria, and sundry other forgotten continents!"

Obviously, any devoutly orthodox subscriber to current dogmas is going to have a hard time embracing anything as "universal" as all that! It was to call attention to, the limitless viewpoint demanded of a soundly based life that H. P. Blavatsky brought back to the attention of contemporary society the sublimely proportioned truths of the Ancient Wisdom Religion currently named Theosophy.

With these truths she undertook to crack the shell of orthodox, one-life complacency that imprisons the timeless, limitless spiritual potential of a society for the moment blindly self-centered in purely materialistic accomplishments and acquirements. By declaring man to be basically spiritual and immortal, and his universe to hold undreamed resources and potencies, *beyond* the material level, she sought to broaden and deepen magnificently the meaning of the term "life". Herewith her teachings encourage man to envision a today and tomorrow celestially expanded in beauty and possibilities. He who accepts the law of Reincarnation, Karma and the divinity of man, finds a soundly based life to involve a radically expanded concept of human destiny.

Accepting himself as basically immortal, the Theosophist accepts his rather minute share in the destiny of humanity shaped in aeons past, in the present, and in aeons yet to come, fully aware of his forgotten participation in a past that has set its stamp on this present. Having accepted such responsibility, he cannot see himself today other than as a consciously beneficent influence in Universal Growth, a role that forbids the pursuit of personal power, personal advancement or aggrandizement. He faces fearlessly his obligation to constitute himself a channel for spiritual beneficence through which it may more readily reach those about him. The soundly based life,

rooted in the ideal of Universal Brotherhood, wordlessly radiates its own beneficence. Beyond protestation and propaganda, his life must become an unanswerable argument for spiritual living—an argument any fellow aspirant may *depend upon*. Not what I, as a human personality declare, but *what my life says*, must eventually convince the earnest inquirer. It is not enough to *have* the answers; each of us must *be* those answers.

This is a large and profound obligation the Theosophist takes on, since the philosophy he lives by is undoubtedly the most profoundly *basic* philosophy ever expounded. It demands more than mere acceptance. It demands to be consistently *applied* to the life: "To live to benefit mankind is the first step". In those words is defined the Universe he has taken on. His dedication to all in it *comes first*. What becomes of him is a mere Karmic incident, and should not exercise his concern unduly.

Because Theosophy is a basic way of life, the dedicated disciple is well advised to avoid becoming over-involved in verbiage, terminology and hair-splitting analyses. Reincarnation means just what it says—many lives on earth, always as human; Karma means equating cause with effect, remembering at all times that the latter *always* follows the former; compassion spells understanding born of selfless love (neither sentimental nor romantic); the Law of Life spells Inner Growth that is spiritually basic; brotherhood means living by the Law of Wholeness—each of us an expression of the ONE LIFE, hence brothers and sisters. All of these principles are operative in the lives of each one of us. Soundly based living means consciously striving to embody these laws in our daily lives, as expressions of Spiritual Gentility and basic Common Sense. A soundly based life creates its own Heaven on Earth!

SECRET DOCTRINE QUESTION AND ANSWER SECTION

CONDUCTED BY GEOFFREY A. BARBORKA

Readers of The Canadian Theosophist are invited to participate in this feature by sending their questions c/o The Editors to be forwarded to Mr. Barborka.

Question. Please give the meaning of the word *Rakshasas* when used in *The Secret Doctrine*.

Answer. Although the word is usually considered demons, one must take into consideration the whole passage where *Rakshasa* is used, because it has a specific meaning in the *Ramayana*, or when it is quoted in a passage from the *Puranas*, or when used in *The Secret Doctrine* in connection with the Fourth Race. Thus in the *Ramayana* the *Rakshasas* are regarded as the giant inhabitants of the former continent of Lanka, whose sovereign was Ravana. In the *Puranas* the *Rakshasas* are the de-

moniacal progeny of *Pulastya*; whereas in *The Secret Doctrine* they are the *Atlanteans*. Then there is the dictionary meaning. The Sanskrit word is derived from the verbal root *raksh*, to guard, to watch; but the noun form conveys the idea of anything to be guarded against, hence an evil or malevolent demon. Continuing the dictionary definition: the *Rakshasas* are distinguishable into three classes: (1) beings of a semi-divine benevolent nature; (2) titans or relentless enemies of the gods; (3) beings such as nocturnal demons, imps, fiends, and goblins.

In the *Padma-Purana*, *Pulastya*, a son

of God is made the progenitor of demons, the Rakshasas, the tempters and the devourers of men. H. P. Blavatsky explains the passage:

“The Demons, so called in the Puranas, are very extraordinary devils when judged from the standpoint of European and orthodox views about these creatures, since all of them—Danavas, Daityas, Pisachas, and the Rakshasas—are represented as extremely pious, following the precepts of the Vedas, some of them even being great Yogis. But they oppose the clergy and Ritualism, sacrifices and forms—just what the full-blown Yogins do to this day in India—and are no less respected for it, though they are allowed to follow neither caste nor ritual; hence all those Puranic giants and Titans are called Devils.” (S.D. I, 415; II, 132-3 6 vol. ed.; I, 447 3rd ed.)

Another allegory is also interpreted, this time from the *Vishnu-Purana*, but first a reference to the Ramayana indicates that some Rakshasas are beautiful:

“In the *Ramayana*, when Hanuman is reconnoitering the enemy in Lanka, he finds there Rakshasas, some hideous, ‘while some were beautiful to look upon,’ and, in *Vishnu-Purana*, there is a direct reference to their becoming the Saviours of ‘Humanity,’ or of Brahma.

“The allegory is very ingenious. Great intellect and too much knowledge are a two-edged weapon in life, and instruments for evil as well as for good. When combined with Selfishness, they will make of the whole of Humanity a footstool for the elevation of him who possesses them, and a means for the attainment of his objects; while, applied to altruistic humanitarian purposes, they may become the means of the salvation of many. At all events, the absence of self-consciousness and intellect will make of man an idiot, a brute in human form. Brahma is *Mahat*—the universal Mind—hence the too-selfish among the Rakshasas showing the desire to become possessed

of it all—to ‘devour’ Mahat. The allegory is transparent.

“At any rate, esoteric philosophy identifies the pre-Brahmanical Asuras, Rudras, Rakshasas and all the ‘Adversaries’ of the Gods in the allegories, with the Egos, which, by incarnating in the still witless man of the Third Race, made him *consciously* immortal. They are, then, during the cycle of Incarnations, the true *dual Logos*—the conflicting and two-faced divine Principle in Man.” (S.D. II, 163-4; III, 171 6-vol. ed.; II, 173 3rd ed.)

Question. Do we lose our identity when we die?

Answer. Here is a question which would be asked by a person attending a Theosophical lecture for the first time and the lecturer most likely referred to Reincarnation. To answer such an inquirer would not be easy simply because the answerer would have to inquire what was meant by “we.” Is the physical body meant? or is it the personality? There is a passage in *The Secret Doctrine* which covers the subject so very well:

“The Human Soul, lower Manas, is the *only* and direct mediator between the personality and the Divine Ego. That which goes to make up on this earth the *personality* miscalled *individuality* by the majority, is the sum of all its mental, physical, and spiritual characteristics, which, being impressed on the human Soul, produces the *man*. Now, of all these characteristics it is the purified thoughts alone which can be impressed on the higher, immortal Ego. This is done by the Human Soul merging again, in its essence, into its parent source, commingling with its Divine Ego during life, and re-uniting itself entirely with it after the death of the physical man. Therefore, unless Kama-Manas transmits to Buddhi-Manas such personal ideations, and such consciousness of its ‘I’ as can be assimilated by the Divine Ego, nothing of that ‘I’ or personality can survive

in the Eternal. Only that which is worthy of the immortal God within us, and identical in its nature with the divine quintessence, can survive; for in this case it is its own, the Divine Ego's 'shadows' or emanations which ascend to it and are indrawn by it into itself again, to become once more part of its own Essence. No noble thought, no grand aspiration, desire, or divine immortal love, can come into the brain of the man of clay and settle there, except as a direct emanation from the Higher to, and through, the lower Ego; all the rest, intellectual as it may seem, proceeds from the 'shadow,' the *lower mind*, in its association and commingling with Kama, and passes away and disappears for ever. But the mental and spiritual ideations of the personal 'I' return to it, as parts of the Ego's Essence, and can never fade out. Thus of the personality that was, only its spiritual experiences, the memory of all that is good and noble, with the consciousness of its 'I' blended with that of all the other personal 'I's' that preceded it, survive and become immortal. There is no distinct or separate immortality for the men of earth outside of the Ego which informed them. That Higher Ego is the sole bearer of all its *alter egos* on earth and their sole representative in the mental state called Devachan. As the last embodied personality, however, has a right to its own special state of bliss, unalloyed and free from the memories of all others, it is the *last life only which is fully and realistically vivid*. Devachan is often compared to the happiest day in a series of many thousands of other 'days' in the life of a person. The intensity of its happiness makes the man entirely forget all others, his past becoming obliterated. This is what we call the Devachanic state." (S.D. V, 490-1 6-vol. ed.; III, 515 3rd ed.)

Question. To what extent, if any can the recently deceased discern or know anything of previous incarnations?

Answer. In the passage above quoted from *The Secret Doctrine*, the reason was given why only the life just lived remains vividly in the memory of the deceased. However, it depends upon the degree of evolutionary development attained by the deceased as to whether more than one life will be "visioned." To quote:

"Very good and holy men see, we are taught, not only the life they are leaving, but even several preceding lives in which were produced the causes that made them what they were in the life just closing. They recognise the law of Karma in all its majesty and justice." (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 162)

Question. How long a time is there between incarnations on earth?

Answer. It all depends upon how a life on earth is lived. The importance of the daily life is the significant factor, as well as the "thought-life." To illustrate the point, a materialist will return to life on earth much faster than will a philosopher. Then, too, it will depend upon the *length* of life on earth. Those who die in childhood return to earth-life quickly. Mr. Sinnett asked the Mahatma in regard to the length of the interlude between lives in this manner. "And for how long? Does the state of spiritual beatitude endure for years? for decades? for centuries?" And the answer was given:

"For years, decades, centuries and millenniums. Oftentimes multiplied by something more. It all depends upon the duration of Karma. Fill with oil Den's little cup, and a city Reservoir of water, and lighting both see which burns the longer. The *Ego* is the wick and Karma the oil: the difference in the quantity of the latter (in the cup and the reservoir) suggesting to you the greatest difference in the duration of various *Karmas*. Every effect must be proportionate to the cause. And, as man's terms of incarnate existence bear but a small proportion to his periods of inter-natal existence in the manvantaric cycle, so the good thoughts, words, and deeds of any one of these 'lives' on

a globe are causative of effects, the working out of which requires far more time than the evolution of the causes occupied." (*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 106)

THE FIGHTING SPIRIT

(Continued from page 82)

ing, and which he wanted others also to follow. In a subsequent letter to Timothy, for instance, he says:

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith!

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me . . .
—II Timothy iv, 7-8

If there is any doubt as to the nature of the crown of righteousness, some light is revealed in a comparable verse found in ancient Hermetic literature:

The soul in man . . . when from the body freed, if it have fought the fight of piety—the fight of piety is to know God and to do wrong to no man—such soul becomes entirely mind.—“The Key”, 19. Quoted in *Thrice Greatest Hermes*, II, 97

A student of comparative religion will not be surprised that a religious message should be found in so many scriptures originating in so many cultures. Of necessity, poetical language is used, which means that interpretation is bound to be subjective. What we find in the scriptures are the records, more or less distorted, of how various Masters or their disciples attempted to translate spiritual wisdom in everyday language. It had to be meaningful to those who heard it, and perhaps it reveals much about man that fighting, wars and battles, featured so frequently in their metaphorical and allegorical verses.

The question is, can they still be meaningful to us? It is entirely up to ourselves what we personally derive from the seemingly fanciful language and stories of the

myths. If we sweep aside the curtain of fancy, however, we often find a treasure house behind it.

Some of the ancient mysteries provide us with a wealth of knowledge. Consider, for example, the story of the twelve labours of Hercules. Each episode has an important message hidden in its allegorical structure. If we can bring ourselves to study them for what they really are, namely, religious truths, and not as fairy stories of an uncultured people, we shall see with more or less clarity what the Herculean mystery is all about. This is not the place to consider the story in detail, but the myth is generally well known—that Hercules was required to complete the twelve labours in order to achieve semi-divine status. In other words, the myth poetically describes his spiritual evolution. Let us merely observe that each of his labours required a particular effort. Now, whether we want to or not, eventually we all must bend ourselves to the same tasks that were set Hercules, and we can make up our mind whether to do them now or to postpone them. But if we choose the latter, let us not forget that the Nemean lion will become stronger with time; that the Augean stables become filthier the longer they are left uncleaned; that the golden apples of the Hesperides will grow higher on the tree and will be more difficult to pick another year. The whole point about the labours is that each requires effort, and Hercules represents Man with sufficient fighting spirit to tackle each one. *Try* is the key word here, as it is in *The Voice of the Silence*, and it seems to be an important word for students of Theosophy. That very valuable book, *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, contains this three letter word scores of times throughout its pages. *Try, try, try . . .* seems to be the message of the Masters.

We could shift our attention to the myths of northern Europe, and there find the fighting spirit implied in every line. In that region of old was a religion whose images were so warlike that the concept of heaven

was a place and opportunity for the elect to participate in battles that would rage for eternity. (As a matter of interest, the ancient Mayas of Mexico hypothesized a similar paradise.) Not only this, but these grand, thundering Teutonic myths went further than any other, and projected into the faraway future a final, master war, and the destruction of the world—the Ragnarok, Twilight of the Gods.

Even in our “soft” technological culture these old epics can still inspire. They should not be dismissed out of hand, because they contain psychological truths that can help us understand ourselves. But, like the *Gita*, the *Voice*, the Bible, they can only challenge us to harness our fighting spirit, they cannot fight the battles for us.

Without the conquest of enemies, without command of the treasure of a vast country, by the mere words, “I am a king,” it is impossible to become one.—Shankaracharya’s *Crest Jewel of Wisdom*, 66 (trs. Mohini M. Chatterji.)

In other words, be wary of a passive nature. We all strive for equilibrium, but being passive is not at all the same as being in balance. At best it is a compromise with a situation; at worst it is a dereliction of duty, and

If, knowing thy duty and thy task, thou bidd’st

Duty and task go by—that shall be sin!
—*Bhagavad-Gita* II, 33

Passivity breeds passivity. It can only end in pain.

* * *

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth.

I came not to send peace, but a sword.
—*Matthew* x, 34

These ringing words of Jesus leave no doubt that *his* way was not to sit and let the world move past him. If only the lesson implied in this forthright statement to his disciples had been heeded and understood by the Christian faithful over nearly two millennia, religion in the west might have been a dynamic force from which indiv-

iduals could have drawn the strength and inspiration to go out and fight the battle of life and uplift not only themselves but our whole civilization. Instead, they have been subjected to a travesty of their Master’s teachings. How often is the founder of Christianity depicted as a soft, passive individual! Gentle Jesus, meek and mild! Does that sound like a man who dared to challenge the conventions of his day? Does that sound like a man who said, “I came not to send peace, but a sword”? And yet in his name has the church deliberately promoted the doctrine of vicarious atonement and played upon the image of a gentle Jesus in order to encourage the faithful to be passive, and accepting, and not to use their own initiative.

A comment is in order here regarding the well-known beatitude, “Blessed are the meek”. A spirited exchange of correspondence in the London Sunday *Observer* in September 1968 indicated that a more acceptable interpretation of the Greek word *praos*, usually translated as “meek”, is “god-controlled”. In so far that this description applies admirably to man’s higher Self, it might be worth considering in a Theosophical context. “God-controlled” is certainly more relevant than “meek” if the Sermon on the Mount is to be meaningful. Incidentally, James Morgan Pryse, an early student of Theosophy and one who devoted much effort to interpreting the New Testament along Theosophical lines, suggested that “dispassionate ones” was preferable to “meek”. This too is admissible, and the term after all is quite compatible with “god-controlled”.

Nor should we overlook the interesting passage in which Jesus was reported as saying

. . . heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.—*Matthew* xi, 12
What could he have meant by that strange remark? Could this have been one of the secrets taught in the ancient mysteries? Meditation on this statement is likely to be fruitful. At the surface level it surely has

a direct bearing on the necessity for an individual to develop his fighting spirit to aid his spiritual growth.

In what seems to have been the same vein, the Mahatma K.H. remarked to Mr. Sinnett in a letter:

It is but with armed hand, and ready to either conquer or perish that the modern mystic can hope to achieve his object.

—*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 7

“Take the bull by the horns” expresses good advice in the workaday world, and it is also good advice to those involved with their own spiritual quest. No one can travel the path for us, so we might as well step out.

Hamlet asks the question,

Whether tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous
fortune

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them . . .

We are all Hamlets and this is a question that must be asked by each and every one of us. It might be necessary to ask it a thousand times a lifetime. There is only one answer, of course. We *must* take arms against our sea of troubles. The decision *must* be made, and once made we have got to move heaven and earth to carry it out.

These days sitting on the fence is so popular an attitude it is almost considered a virtue. For the sake of expediency there is something in us that makes us want to be all things to all people. It cannot be. Admittedly, situations sometimes arise in which it is possible to strike a neutral attitude, but they are ones which are inconsequential as far as the individual is concerned, or else the neutrality will only be a temporary achievement. Like Hamlet, we shall find it less and less to our liking. Our conscience does make cowards of us all.

A Canadian politician was reported to have said, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” Of course, he was being a bit pompous when he said it, but he had a good point. It is the one who knows that

to strike while the iron is hot is the only way to shape and temper steel who has the fighting spirit.

If Shakespeare had shown no other signs of genius in his writings he did so when he phrased that clear-cut statement of alternatives: “to suffer outrageous fortune . . . or to end the sea of troubles by opposing them.” There it is. There is no in-between. The fighting spirit within us is quenched every time we hesitate to make the difficult decision, and it takes time and discomfort to revive it.

Finally must be mentioned that hardest of all truths to understand. It is this: that providing a decision is made in all honesty, it does not matter whether it is the right one or not. Making the decision and doing the deeds, these are the important factors.

As Krishna says, in the *Bhagavad-Gita*:
He shall not fail in sin who fronts the
task

Set him by Nature’s hand!

—*Bhagavad Gita* XVIII, 47

and again:

. . . thy task prescribed

With spirit unattached gladly perform
Since in performance of plain duty man
Mounts to his highest bliss.

—*ibid.* III, 19

And to repeat the words of *The Voice of the Silence*:

. . . each failure is success, each sincere
attempt wins its reward in time.

It is not easy to accept this idea in an age in which worldly success is counted above everything. Nevertheless, it is a lesson that has to be learned: making a mistake is not, in itself, a bad thing. It is only relative, after all. Of all people, politician Theodore Roosevelt knew the truth:

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena: whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at best, knows the triumph of high

achievement and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

The fighting spirit is the quality of that man in the arena. For us the arena is the environment of our earthly incarnations. In it, like Arjuna we might often find our task distasteful, but like him we must eventually listen to and obey the words of the Divine Krishna:

But all thy dues discharging, for my sake,
With meditation centred inwardly,
Seeking no profit, satisfied, serene,
Heedless of issue—fight!

—*Bhagavad-Gita* III, 30

BOOK REVIEWS

Commentaries of Hierocles on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras, from the French of Andre Dacier, done into English by N. Rowe. Reprinted 1971. Published by The Theosophical Publishing House Ltd., London, England. vi + 132 pp. Price 75p.

According to Thomas Taylor, Hierocles, “. . . though inferior in accuracy and sublimity of conception to Iamblichus and Proclus, yet . . . he uncommonly excelled in his dianoetic part, and in a venerable and magnificent fluency of diction.”

Judged only on his *Commentaries on the Golden Verses*, such praise of Hierocles would be overly generous to say the least. In his compilation of source material on Pythagoras, K. S. Guthrie omitted them altogether, calling them “wordy and commonplace”. But this is too harsh, and no doubt the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes.

In any case, it is the *Golden Verses* themselves that are important. The student, if he is to understand their inner meanings, must through meditation and practice strive eventually to make his own commentaries. The Hieroclean exposition, in my opinion, is most helpful when by elaboration it

throws light on the unfamiliar Pythagorean phraseology.

This is a reprint of the T.P.H. edition first published in 1906. The Dacier and Rowe versions, incidentally, appeared two hundred years earlier. As will be noted, the English version is a translation of a translation (of at least one other translation of the original); yet, if a spot comparison with a Thomas Taylor rendering of one of the *Commentaries* is indicative of the whole, amazingly little distortion crept in as it passed through the various translators' hands. —Ted G. Davy

* * *

Flying Saucer Message, by Rex Dutta. Published 1972 by Pelham Books, London, England. 117 pp. Price £1.75.

It would be inadequate to call this book a sequel to the author's earlier *Flying Saucer Viewpoint* (C.T. Sept.-Oct. 1971). It is quite capable of standing on its own. Whereas the first presented the reaction of a student of Theosophy to flying saucer phenomena, this one is nothing less than an attempt to show the relevance of Theosophy to the space age.

More than a sequel, then, this is an elevation to a new dimension of thought in which to present the rationale of flying saucers. The reality Mr. Dutta urges the reader to consider may be epitomized as “Oneness IS”—in other words, Universal Brotherhood. The “message” is, in point of fact, nothing less than pure Theosophy.

As a presentation of Theosophy it is faithful in its adherence to the original exposition of *The Secret Doctrine*. It is deliberately written in a style to force the reader to think at every line (and between the lines—even between the words). A most refreshing and stimulating experience.

An appendix includes the comments of four other students of Theosophy. More food for thought is contained in the transcript of a taped call-in radio program in which a strange, unidentified “outer space” voice was recorded in conversation.

Flying Saucer Message is as challenging

a book as is ever likely to be read by a flying saucer enthusiast. It will also challenge the complacent Theosophist, because it demands answers to questions seldom considered. Both should read it—and hopefully react.

—Ted G. Davy

* * *

Laghu-Yoga-Vasistha, translated into English by K. Narayanaswami Aiyer. Second edition published 1971 by the Adyar Library and Research Centre, Adyar, India. xxxiii + 486 pp.

The *Laghu Yoga Vasistha* is an Advaita text which basically deals with Jnana-Yoga. Vasistha was one of the great Rishis of Hindu tradition, and this work is supposedly a narrative of his instructions to Prince Rama. Rama asks the meaning of a number of difficult philosophic and religious con-

cepts, and the sage answers in the form of illustrative stories.

No little effort is required at first to become accustomed to this type of presentation, although fortunately many of the terms used are familiar to those acquainted with Theosophical literature. For the persistent, however, there are rewards in plenty; some of the stories struck me as being very helpful in conveying difficult ideas.

The Adyar Library and Research Centre is to be commended for publishing this edition, a valuable item in its already impressive catalogue of Asian literature. The *Yoga Vasistha* is a work that has stood the test of time, and its contents are of a nature that will have a direct appeal to students of Theosophy.

—Ted G. Davy

NORTH AMERICAN THEOSOPHICAL STUDENTS' CONFERENCE

The 1972 North American Theosophical Students' Conference will be held, as previously announced, at Olcott, headquarters of The Theosophical Society in America. As in previous years, this Conference is sponsored jointly by the Canadian and American Sections and, this year, the American Section will be host. The program itself will take the form of a seminar, utilizing the rich resources of the Olcott Library and Research Center.

Accommodations can be secured at near-by motels. Two motels quite close to Olcott, and to each other, are recommended, and members should write directly, in advance, for reservations:

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27 W. 010 North Ave.
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Prices at both motels are about the same: single rooms, \$10 to \$11; twin-bedded rooms, \$14 to \$15.

Meals: Breakfast may be obtained at restaurants adjoining the motels. As indicated on the program, some meals (all vegetarian) will be served at Olcott. Prices for meals at Olcott are shown on the program. There are a number of restaurants in the area for those who prefer a different menu. The main Conference dinner will be on Saturday evening, October 7.

Registration fee: \$1.00. Members are asked to register *in advance* and, when registering, to indicate what meals will be taken at Olcott.

Transportation: Transportation between the motels and Olcott will be provided without charge. We cannot undertake to meet arriving planes at O'Hare Airport unless arrival is at a time when there is no other service to the Wheaton area. Information on airport bus service to this area will be sent upon request.

For registration and information write to: The Theosophical Society in America, P.O. Box 270, Wheaton, IL 60187. Plan to attend this most important seminar-conference and meet your fellow students!

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

“The Roots of Theosophy”

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7

- 10:00 a.m. Registration
- 11:00 a.m. Opening of Conference
- 12:00 noon Lunch . . . \$1.75
- 2:00 p.m. Forming of Working Groups
- A. The Roots of Theosophy in Eastern Thought
 - 1. Hinduism
 - 2. Buddhism
 - 3. Chinese Thought
 - B. The Roots of Theosophy in the West
 - 1. Pre-Christian
 - 2. Christian
 - 3. Modern Thought
- 3:00 p.m. Coffee Break
- 3:30 p.m. Continuation of Working Groups
- 5:30 p.m. Conference Dinner . . . \$2.50
- 7:30 p.m. Film: “Reincarnation”

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8

- 9:30 a.m. Working Groups meet for members' reports
Preparation of Group Presentations
- 12:00 noon Dinner . . . \$2.50
- 3:30 p.m. Public Lecture—“Whence All Our Wisdom Springs”
T. G. Davy, General Secretary,
The Theosophical Society in Canada
- 7:30 p.m. Presentations by Groups: The Roots of Theosophy in
Eastern Thought

MONDAY, OCTOBER 9

- 9:30 a.m. Presentations by Groups: The Roots of Theosophy in the West
- 11:30 a.m. Closing of Conference
- 12:00 noon Lunch . . . \$1.75

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