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THE GOLDEN STAIRS

“BEHOLD THE TRUTH BEFORE YOU : A CLEAN LIFE, AN OPEN MIND, A PURE HEART, AN EAGER INTELLECT, AN UNVEILED SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION, A BROTHERLINESS FOR ONE’S CO-DISCIPLE, A READINESS TO GIVE AND RECEIVE ADVICE AND INSTRUCTION, A LOYAL SENSE OF DUTY TO THE TEACHER, A WILLING OBEDIENCE TO THE BEHESTS OF TRUTH, ONCE WE HAVE PLACED OUR CONFIDENCE IN, AND BELIEVE THAT TEACHER TO BE IN POSSESSION OF IT ; A COURAGEOUS ENDURANCE OF PERSONAL INJUSTICE, A BRAVE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, A VALIANT DEFENCE OF THOSE WHO ARE UNJUSTLY ATTACKED, AND A CONSTANT EYE TO THE IDEAL OF HUMAN PROGRESSION AND PERFECTION WHICH THE SECRET SCIENCE (*Gupta Vidyā*) DEPICTS —THESE ARE THE GOLDEN STAIRS UP THE STEPS OF WHICH THE LEARNER MAY CLIMB TO THE TEMPLE OF DIVINE WISDOM.”

At Blarney



HISTORICAL OCCASION

JOHN B. S. COATS, *International President*

On Sunday, November 16, 1975, the second day of the World Centenary Congress in New York, four talks were given by students of Theosophy with affiliations other than that of the Theosophical Society. Two were reprinted in our March-April issue: "Let There Be Light", by Eva de Lisle; and "The Large Purpose" by Grace Knoche (read by Kirby van Mater). We are pleased now to present the other talks: "At Night I Accept the Authority of the Torches" by Iverson L. Harris; and "The Dream That Never Dies" by Boris de Zirkoff.

This Session, which was well received by Congress delegates, had a unity and warmth of its own. For this, much credit is due to President John Coats who "set the stage", so to speak, with an introduction that was both gracious in its welcome to the guest speakers and frank in dealing with the separative causes and attitudes which long ago led to divisions in the Theosophical Movement. Here is his introduction to what might well be looked back on in years to come as an "historical occasion". Eds.

It is specially cheering this morning to take the chair at a meeting in which are participating four speakers drawn from the various branches of the Theosophical Movement. In a certain sense we are present on a unique and, I hope, "historical occasion."

To celebrate the Centenary of H.P. Blavatsky's birth in 1931, Dr. de Purucker of The Theosophical Society, Point Loma, proposed a reunion in which a variety of theosophical students should take part. On behalf of the Adyar Society Dr. Annie Besant accepted with alacrity and warmth. Subsequently, however, the hoped-for coming together did not eventuate, and individual celebrations of H.P.B.'s birthday took place separately, although there was a warm exchange of greetings.

Today, with the events that led to the formation, on whatever grounds and for whatever reasons, of other theosophical groups, still further—much further—away from us in the past—it is a significant expression of the basic goodwill and sound commonsense that characterizes us all, that students from various theosophical backgrounds have come together here in New York, to commemorate that exciting

and richly productive event in 1875 which was the beginning of all our work.

Problems, divisions, suspicions, lie — some of them, as far back as 80 years in time — and today the feeling prevails that this past may no longer be permitted to obstruct the closer understanding, co-operation and mutual respect which may normally exist between those who have espoused the same great cause. Our paths may not be identical but we might all agree that they run parallel and that it is the spirit of Theosophy that inspires and energizes the activities of each earnest aspirant whatever his background or label.

Human as we are, we should do well to avoid too facile judgments of past events. It is easy to be partisan, to take sides and to divide, but is it not wiser to realize that even the most dedicated and illustrious of persons may be misinformed or misjudged? Best of all may we understand that a spirit of forgiveness and deep love which expresses itself in union, is, in truth and in the long run, the most positive feeling to develop within oneself and the one most guaranteed to lead to enduring peace and harmony.

While waiting to have an interview with

the *New York Times*, I noticed on a board on the wall the ideal of the newspaper, "To give the news impartially without fear or favour, regardless of any party, sect or interest involved," and I felt that this represented the true spirit in which all difficult situations should be tackled. Today we have the grand opportunity of facing a long term problem within our Movement and of putting at least a few of the causes behind us permanently.

In the days of the nineties, as we all know, grievous difficulties arose between the leaders of the Society, and notably Mrs. Besant and Mr. Judge seemed to be at variance with one another. The detailed history of the period can be studied by us all — but history it is and long past history at that — for we are happy to find that the protagonists could not as theosophists continue to bear any grudge indefinitely.

In *The Theosophist* for October, 1909, Mrs. Besant wrote an account of her visit to the United States in which she speaks so appreciatively of Mr. Judge. Whatever you may think of her words and their implication, these are they:

"... We walked, on leaving the car, along Madison Avenue, to look at the old home of the Section. As we came near I thought to myself: 'How fond Judge was of New York.' — 'And am still,' said a quiet voice, and there he was, walking beside me, as he and I had so often walked in the nineties. He will help much in the work of this tour for he loves the American people, and is ever eager to labour for their benefit."

And again, in *The Theosophist* for November, 1913, she wrote:

"... We must never forget, in looking back to him, that it was to his efforts that the building of the Society in America was practically wholly due; that it was his devotion, his unwearying services, which planted Theosophy in America and spread it over the whole of that vast continent; ..."

It is true that on one occasion she referred to him saying that he had been self-deceived and consequently in error, and being an honest woman — of which there can be no doubt — she must really have believed this to be true. On the other hand Mr. Judge and those closest to him quite obviously felt that he had been misjudged and that it was Mrs. Besant, in this case, who was mistaken, and that the error was hers.

Deeply admiring as I am of Mrs. Besant whose many years of tireless service to humanity is at all times an inspiring example to every one of us, her work lay, it appears, in this material world where we all find ourselves, and where mistakes may still be made.

The more we read of the life and work of Mr. Judge, the more aware one becomes of the work for Theosophy and the Theosophical Society that was the aim and purpose of his life. But all of us, whoever we may be, past and present, may act unwisely — both misunderstand and be misunderstood — and probably this will continue to be so until we stand — symbolically at least — on the other side of the Great Range.

In each of our groups, fine women and men have laboured to serve the cause of Truth and I do not doubt but that did I but know sufficiently the writings of all of them, I should find in the literature of a number of groups expressions of appreciation corresponding to those quoted above, directed towards Mrs. Besant and others in the Society I have the honour to represent today and towards others too.

When there comes about any disruption in the field of Brotherhood — no one is the gainer — save perhaps those forces of obstruction and shadow which are constantly on the alert to counteract nature's evolutionary plan.

I feel that we, of another generation, cannot take sides in an argument that took place so long ago. Let us all act in the spirit of forgiveness — making apology if and where apology is due. On behalf of the

Theosophical Society centred at Adyar I am happy to do this, here and now, and to say to you all, let bygones be bygones, once and for all, and let us now get on with the job we are here to do.

And so today is indeed for us all a special occasion on which I welcome in the name of all present the four speakers who are to address us this morning.

AT NIGHT I ACCEPT THE AUTHORITY OF THE TORCHES

IVERSON L. HARRIS

Text of a talk delivered at the Centenary World Congress,

New York, November 16, 1975

Before plunging into my theme, which is taken from the words of Victor Hugo, "At Night I Accept the Authority of the Torches," I wish to pay a little tribute to your President, because he has transcended the boundaries of mere organizational jurisprudence, and but for him, we speakers would not be on this platform addressing you today. I think he adopted the way in the language of Edwin Markham's quatrain:

"He drew a circle that shut me out,
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win,
For we drew a circle that took him in."

We may ask ourselves, "How are we to know who are the torchbearers—the authority of whose torches we must follow?" There is an Arabian proverb which says:

"He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool. Shun him.

"He who knows not, and knows that he knows not, is simple. Teach him.

"He who knows, and knows not that he knows, is asleep. Wake him.

"He who knows, and knows that he knows, is wise. Follow him.

These people are the torchbearers, the authority of whose torches we can afford to accept.

In *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, one of the Masters wrote, "The Chiefs want a 'Brotherhood of Humanity,' a real Universal Fraternity started; an institution which will make itself known throughout the world, and arrest the attention of the highest minds." That, I think, we should always bear in mind. In this case, the Master was not speaking of that brotherhood which is a fact in nature, based on spiritual unity. He said that we must form a new "Universal Fraternity". We have to some extent succeeded, but from what the President's initial remarks show, we have not entirely succeeded as theosophists should have succeeded in establishing that universal fraternity. That is one of our main purposes, of course, to establish a universal fraternity.

But there is another equally essential purpose of the Theosophical Movement. It is embodied in our motto: SATYA NASTI PARO DHARMA— "There is no religion higher than Truth." And friends, if we can carry in mind those two principles, the search for truth and the seeking for a universal fraternity, we cannot possibly go far astray, and we shall find the right torches to follow in the nighttime.

Now, in our search for Truth, I think we must be even more scientific than the scientists in that we must realize that there is a true science that transcends the possibilities of mere measurement by physical means or by mathematical calculation. We must be more philosophical than the worldly philosophers, because we must remember, with Shakespeare, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." And, as religionists, we must be even more dedicated than the sectarian or bigoted religionists, because with us, religion is that which binds us — *religare*, which binds us back to the supreme source from which we all sprang. There we will have religion in the broadest sense — it will be more impersonal and more universal than the sectarian can possibly be.

In my estimation, there are two main phases of our theosophical philosophy which we naturally accept, depending somewhat on, often, our own temperaments and backgrounds. They are not in contrast to one another, nor is there a dichotomy between them, but it is a matter of emphasis. There is the phase of our teaching which we may call "esoteric" and "mystical" and "religious" almost, I might say, or theological. That appeals very much to very earnest people who are enthralled with the cosmic ideas that theosophy has to offer about the beginning of the world and the whole of cosmic evolution. Then there is the other type of theosophist who will find more satisfaction and feel more at home in the ethical aspects of theosophy, in phases of theosophy which indicate the right relationships among ourselves and our duties — social duties to our fellow man.

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Both are immensely important. I think that many of us, so far as the metaphysical and esoteric phases go, should put ourselves into the ranks of those who know not, and know that they know not and are ready to be taught. Then, there is that other phase of theosophical philosophy, as to how we should conduct ourselves in our own behaviour in our relations with our fellow men. And that is something that everyone of us can understand and put into practice and set an example to the world of what real theosophists are.

The keynote for that phase of theosophy, as to the whole outline of purposeful living, was given by H.P.B. in her message, "Behold the Truth before you," and many of you are probably familiar with it, but like the great pieces of music, you cannot hear it too often. I am going to repeat it for you, and I hope you will not be tired by it, but will listen to it as though it were being uttered by H.P.B. for the first time.

"Behold the Truth before you. A clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled spiritual perception, a brotherliness for one's co-disciples, a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction, a loyal sense of duty to the teacher, a willing obedience to the behests of truth, once you have placed your confidence in, and believe that teacher to be in possession of it, a courageous endurance of personal injustice, a brave declaration of principles, a valiant defense of those who are unjustly attacked, and a constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the secret science depicts, these are the golden stairs up the steps of which the learner may climb to the temple of divine wisdom."

There is enough for us to think about for a lifetime.

Now, as to the other phase of H.P.B.'s universal message, just imagine the grandiloquence of a proclamation like this,

and imagine what a challenge it was to the sectarians and scientists of her days. In the Preface to *The Secret Doctrine*, she wrote:

“...it is perhaps desirable to state unequivocally that the teachings, however fragmentary and incomplete, contained in these volumes, belong neither to the Hindu, the Zoroastrian, the Chaldean, nor the Egyptian religion, neither to Buddhism, Islam, Judaism nor Christianity exclusively. The Secret Doctrine is the essence of all these. Sprung from it in their origins, the various religious schemes are now made to merge back into their original element, out of which every mystery and dogma has grown, developed and become materialized.”

Have you ever realized what an immense statement that was? She embraces in fact the whole of the religious world and tells the world that they all sprang from the Secret Doctrine. Imagine what a challenge that was to sectarians at the time? Do you wonder why they all attacked her so vigorously? And yet, they still do challenge those statements, but in order to prove her thesis, she wrote those two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine*, and anyone who challenges her statement will have to analyze the whole of *The Secret Doctrine*. And that means he will have to have an encyclopaedic education, and spend the rest of his life trying to do it.

Mr. Judge, in the introduction to his very beautiful and intelligible book, *The Ocean of Theosophy*, says that: “Theosophy is that ocean of knowledge which spreads from shore to shore of the evolution of sentient beings; unfathomable in its deepest parts, it gives the greatest minds their fullest scope, yet, shallow enough at its shores, it will not overwhelm the understanding of a child.” Now that is a broad outline of the metaphysical and the theological and the scientific exposition of theosophy. But as boys, we attended the William Quan Judge Club, and there, we

had a motto of William Quan Judge which applies to that other phase of theosophy, and its application to daily life. He says, “What, then, is the royal talisman, the panacea, finally? It is duty, selflessness.” Now, imagine what ideals they were for young boys to grow up under. What thinks the world of the talisman? It is duty, selflessness, two keynotes to fashion our lives upon. Later on, it expanded into the William Quan Judge Theosophical Club, and there we had another exposition of what real theosophy is as applied to daily life: “Be what you love, strive after what you find beautiful and high, and let the rest go. Harmony, sacrifice, devotion — take these for your keynotes and express them everywhere in the highest possible way.”

Now, the one who had the main influence in fashioning my life at the time I was a boy (and later I had the privilege of travelling with her for a quarter of a century as her travelling secretary) was Katherine Tingley, though she did not emphasize at all the metaphysical and theological aspects of theosophy. In fact, she said: “Think of theosophy not so much as a system of philosophic or other teaching, but as the highest law of conduct, which is the enacted expression of divine love and compassion.” And we, as children, were taught to repeat daily, “Do well the smallest duty, and when the day is done, there will be no regrets, no time wasted. Then joy will come.”

Later in life, I had the privilege of studying the deeper aspects of theosophy under Dr. de Purucker, who was a brilliant scholar as well as a born mystic and seer, having been familiar with Hebrew, Greek and Sanskrit as well as modern tongues; and having taught the philosophy of *The Secret Doctrine* as a young man, he was so thoroughly steeped in it that he was able to distill even the most profound teaching so that we could all understand it. Now, he defined theosophy as “. . . a formulation in human language of the structure, the composition, the origin, the present state and destiny of the universe.” There you

have it on the cosmic scale again. But what else did he say, for the other phase of theosophy which I have emphasized? He said, "Light for the mind, love for the heart, understanding for the intellect; all three must be satisfied in every man before he finds real peace."

I hope that what little I have said so far will help to arouse in all of you, as it has aroused in me for seventy-five years now, this wonderful appreciation of the treasure-house of knowledge and information and inspiration that we have in our theosophical teaching. It is something we should cherish every day of our lives; something that can never be taken away from us; something that ought to give us a power, and the right

to walk with our heads high and with our hearts humble in the world, because we have something worthwhile to give for all time. Now, there have been others besides them in the theosophical field who knew, and knew that they knew. One of the most wonderful expositions of Truth that was ever given was by Robert Browning when he said: "Truth is within ourselves. It takes no rise from outward things, whate'er you may believe . . . There is an inmost centre in us all, where truth abides in fulness . . . This perfect, clear perception—which is truth."

Would it not be wonderful if we could all find that "inmost centre in us all, where truth abides in fulness"?

THE DREAM THAT NEVER DIES!

BORIS DE ZIRKOFF

*Text of a talk delivered at the Centenary World Congress,
New York, November 16, 1975.*

All of us here, assembled in this Hall in ties of brotherhood, are a partial embodiment of a noble dream! . . . A dream of ancient days, a dream living in the hearts of men from ages past, a dream implanted in men's minds by his original Guides and divine Instructors—the dream of a *united mankind* of a rebirth of *esoteric wisdom*, and of a *world at peace*.

From immemorial past, as far as tradition can tell, the noblest men and women of all times have dreamt that dream. From time to time, movements have arisen to bring about the realization of that dream, at least on some small scale.

A hundred years ago, a small group of earnest seekers dreamt it again. A mystic gong was struck once more. Its sound began to spread far and wide, calling people to try and embody the ancient dream once again. Some heard it and came at once; first but a few, more later, more

again . . . until a steady stream of seekers and students poured from the far corners of the world to join company with those who were the chief agents of this noble undertaking—H.P. Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott and William Quan Judge.

A hidden transom opened in human skies, and the light of the Ancient Wisdom illumined the barren fields of a deeply material age which had forgotten its spiritual origin and divine heritage. Were it not for these original pioneers, and Those behind them and far greater than themselves, we would not be here today in this vast assembly. Let us not forget it!

Today, a hundred years after the mystic gong was struck again, we face a world in transition, filled with unrest, anxiety and turmoil. Be not dismayed! A great rebirth is taking place in the world, a mighty change, a total reconstruction of the stage-setting, and such goes invariably together

with an irreversible dislocation of things. How could it be otherwise?

The Wind of the Spirit is blowing over the world and is taking with it our own accustomed inner landscapes.

The unbending spirit of man is again taking its stand on the front lines, and its flaming banner is raised upon the beachhead of a new "Continent of Thought."

New chapters in civilization and culture are not the dreary results of sociological causes and brain-mind cogitations. They are the manifestations of a transcendent vision, inspired by the *dream that never dies*. Today, that dream is in the hearts of millions and nothing can ever extinguish it.

Whatever we experience as a human family the world over is not some evil thing decreed by some imaginary providence. It is but our own past streaming over our heads and meeting us in front in violent confrontation. The key to the solution of these conditions lies within ourselves.

The Theosophical Movement of today has become a power in the world and has to be reckoned with. But it does face some dangers that should never be overlooked.

One of these dangers is *commercialism*. The Ancient Wisdom cannot be sold, rented or leased. It can only be given freely, without shackles or conditions of any kind. We all know that.

Another danger it had to meet several times already is from certain political powers whose inborn myopia prevents them from seeing the vast horizons of spiritual thought. This danger is but of a temporary nature, and is usually defeated in time by its own blatant arrogance.

But the most serious danger facing the Theosophical Movement in any part of today's world is the wild proliferation of psychism, in all its many forms.

It is *imperative* that the genuine work of our spiritual and intellectual movement be adequately protected from this menace. Warnings about it, and ways to meet it abound in H.P. Blavatsky's writings and in those of many other theosophists.

It is therefore a matter of grave concern to observe the spread in various lodges and centres of the Theosophical Society of programmes and seminars about psychic powers, magical forces, flying saucers, curious and outlandish subjects dealing with the psychic nature of man, lower forms of yoga, Kundalini, and what not—instead of the basic teachings of Theosophy, the fundamental principles of our Ancient Wisdom, of which, unfortunately, very many members of the Society are often ignorant.

If the Theosophical Society does not make an imperatively needed change in this trend, it could very easily be submerged in a few years from now in a wave of insane psychism and find itself unable to ride the crest of the wave of the future — which is a spiritual wave, and to lead the intellectual awakening of humanity into spirituality.

Where psychism is rampant, spirituality flies out the window, evicted by man's folly.

We must never hesitate to proclaim that one of the main purposes in founding the Theosophical Society was to *stem the onrushing tide of psychism*. Unless the organized movement succeeds in so doing, it may not outlive the century.

On the other hand, if the Theosophical Movement becomes a unified force in presenting the genuine teachings of the Founders, and of those whose direct agents they were; if it purifies its waters and its channels and proclaims the basic truths of the esoteric philosophy to the rising legions of serious seekers, its future in the next century will be one of glorious achievement and promise.

As pointed out by William Quan Judge, the real unity of the movement does not consist in having a single organization. It is "found in the similarity of aim, of aspiration, of purpose, of teachings, and of ethics."

The Challenge of Century the Second is at our doorstep.

Behind our work, as a backdrop to all our

labour, stands the mystic power of our dream.

I call on you to recognize that challenge!

I call on you to rise to that challenge and to meet it with all you have in you!

Born in bygone ages, the progeny of starlike beings at the dawn of mankind, handed down by generations of seers from age to age, our dream can never die.

When a hundred years ago the Brotherhood of Adept-Brothers sent out H.P.B. as their direct agent to the outer world, she acted in accordance with their ancient tradition. She later founded a School, a School of the esoteric thought, a gnostic school, which simply means a school of the ancient *Gnosis* or spiritual knowledge, of *Atmavidya*, *Brahmavidya*, *Bodhidharma* — call it by any of these terms.

Like all genuine schools of esoteric wisdom, the one she founded has its outer forum and its inner sanctuary. The Theosophical Movement is the outer forum. As to the inner sanctuary, or heart of that school, it is made up of the sum-total of students the world over, irrespective of affiliation or none, who are bent on a life of spiritual discipline, who have taken some serious vows, and are striving after a life of discipleship.

Without this inner heart, the outer movement would be a mockery and a sorry farce.

And the chief characteristics of these students of the inner sanctuary are: impersonality, selflessness, wholehearted dedication to truth, forgiveness of all wrong done to themselves, sacrifice of all personal, worldly objectives; and their motto is; to know, to will, to dare and to remain silent!

Thus H.P.B. forged another link in the age-old Hermetic chain.

There is a hidden wisdom in the world, a wisdom not apparent to the eyes of men.

There is a secret path which leads to that wisdom and it starts at the very root of your own heart.

There is a secret method of living, a

course of life, a code of conduct, which provides the necessary conditions for treading that path, and enables man to reach the hidden wisdom and make it his own.

These three: the hidden wisdom to be attained, the path which leads thereto, and the method of living — are the main keynotes of the message which H.P.B. proclaimed to the world.

Above all else, encompassing all other thoughts, permeating all other precepts and teachings, she proclaimed the *Ideal of Universal Brotherhood*—global brotherhood, mutual understanding and sympathy, the forging of mankind into one total family—the dream of the finest men and women throughout history, the objective of their dedicated lives, the inspiration of their thoughts, feelings and actions, the dream that never dies!

She disclosed the existence of *highly-evolved men*, the natural product of ages of evolution — *living men*, whose direct agent she was, entrusted with a mandate to accomplish a specific and significant task in the outer world.

Throughout her life and mission, she pointed to those starlike beings who, watching silently, guard and guide the human race through the dangerous stages of its immaturity.

Upon the distant horizon of our hopes, where *Their World of Light* touches our own world, she pointed to those figures of supreme manhood, whose hearts are made of fire, whose minds are flaming stars, whose souls are woven of compassion, and whose imperious will is dedicated to utter service and the transcending search of never-ending truth

To them are pledged the substance of our lives, the fibre of our consciousness, and the well-springs of our utmost being, in the vibrant silence where words can only fail, where thoughts are beaconlights.

In their steps we try to follow . . .

As men of vision and of heart-yearning, *we dare, to dream.*

In the face of tyrants, above the din of

battles, against the storms of human passions and the barbed-wire entanglements of ignorance and prejudice, *we dare to dream.*

We dream of a united mankind, of good will among men, and a world at peace.

For our dreams are rooted in the

abiding vision of the heart, the inner spaces of our utmost being, beyond the tyranny of time, the rhythmic ebb and flow of passing years.

Our dream can never die, nor can it pass away . . . It lives in the heart of all.

Dreamers may die . . . but never dies the dream!

ALFRED RUSSELL WALLACE

NATURAL SELECTION AND THEOSOPHY

JENNO

Alfred Russell Wallace, renowned as the co-discoverer, with Charles Darwin, of the Theory of Natural Selection, was one of the group who met the Founders of the Theosophical Society when they reached London in January, 1879, on their way to India. Mr. Wallace was one of the many writers quoted by H.P. Blavatsky to explain profound Theosophical concepts to the many diverse, orthodox, sceptical and spiritist schools of thought which prevailed during the nineteenth century; and, at the same time, in the space of a few volumes, reveal a portion of the doctrine for the benefit of those who could understand, and for those who would incarnate in the ensuing centuries.

Though he helped to originate the Theory of Natural Selection, Wallace differed radically from Darwin as to the origin of man as an intellectual and moral being. In his autobiography, written at the age of 82, he commented:

“The belief and teaching of Darwin was, that man’s whole nature — physical, mental, intellectual and moral — was developed from the lower animals by means of the same laws of variation and survival; and, as a consequence of this belief, that there was no difference *in kind* between man’s nature and animal nature,

but only as of degree. My view, on the other hand was, and is, that there is a difference in kind, intellectually and morally, between man and other animals; and that while his body was undoubtedly developed by the continuous modification of some ancestral animal form, some different agency analagous to that which first produced organic life and then originated *consciousness* came into play in order to develop the higher intellectual and spiritual nature in man.”

—*My Life*, Vol. 2, P. 16

Relative to this, H.P. Blavatsky wrote:

“As to Natural Selection itself, the utmost misconception prevails among many present-day thinkers who tacitly accept the conclusions of Darwinism. It is, for instance, a mere device of rhetoric to credit ‘Natural Selection’ with the power of *originating* species. ‘Natural Selection’ is no Entity; but a convenient phrase for describing the mode in which the survival of the fit and the elimination of the unfit among organisms is brought about in the struggle for existence . . . ‘Selection, as a Power,’ is in

(Continued on page 62)

NOTES AND COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Just as we went to press we learned of the death of one of our oldest members, Benjamin Garside. He was President of Atma Vidya Lodge.

More details will be given in the next issue.

* * *

Plans are being made for the first annual meeting of the newly incorporated body, The Theosophical Society in Canada, to be held in Victoria, British Columbia, on July 21. Now that we are incorporated, annual meetings are obligatory, and I hope that as the years go on they will be held in different centres — wherever, in fact, the possibility of obtaining a quorum may be reasonably assumed.

Because of geographical and other difficulties, conventions are seldom attempted in Canada. With the annual meetings providing incentive, however, opportunities will be provided for Lodges in an area to get together occasionally.

* * *

Our latest efforts to hold convention-type meetings were in the years 1969 through 1972. Each Fall, in cooperation with The Theosophical Society in America, we participated in the North American Theosophical Students' Conferences. Canadian members, especially those living in southern Ontario, were thus enabled to study and fraternize with fellow students from the United States.

* * *

We recently received a pleasant reminder of the 1971 Conference. The April and May, 1976 issues of *Hermes* magazine included extracts from the principal talks given at that meeting.

Hermes is an impressive publication. It is printed on an unconventional paper size, and the lithography and general layout are most pleasing to the eye. The 48-page contents of a typical issue might include extracts from ancient Eastern scriptures, reprints of early Theosophical articles, and modern (unsigned) articles.

Published monthly, *Hermes* may be obtained from P.O. Box 959, Santa Barbara, California 93102, U.S.A. Annual subscription is \$10.00.

* * *

Our members include a number of nonagenarians and several approaching their ninetieth year. Their continued activity is an example to us all.

One of these is Frank Boucher, now 93, whose article, "The Challenge of Death" appears in this issue. Although no longer able to attend Lodge meetings, he is visited regularly by members of Victoria Lodge and he maintains a keen interest in the Society and in the Wisdom-Teaching.

* * *

This is a reminder that three films are available on free loan anywhere in Canada. Their titles are: "How Many Lifetimes", "Reincarnation" and "The Universal Flame". Borrowers are asked to be responsible only for the return postage or shipping charge.

Cassette recordings of the proceedings of the Centenary World Congress, held in New York, November, 1975, are also available on free loan.

Copies of the reports of the Task Force Study Groups at both the Centenary Congress and the Centenary Convention, held in Adyar in December, 1975, will be sent on request.

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ATMA VIDYA LODGE

Atma Vidya Lodge celebrated White Lotus Day on May 8, 1976 by having an outdoor meeting in the wooded garden of one of the members. The day was blessed with bright sunshine, a welcome break in a very cold and rainy Springtide.

The members collected a beautiful bouquet of white flowering dogwood, white daisies and other white flowers and flowering shrubs. Readings were delivered by members from *The Voice of the Silence*, and Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* and *The Song Celestial*.

Amidst the Spring foliage, meadowlarks and robins sang sweetly as the members paid tribute to Madame Blavatsky, the great-hearted woman who had suffered untold pain and vilification at the hands of a selfish, misguided and materialistic public.

In her writings, she had brought to this dark sphere, the wonderful truths of mankind's actual spiritual nature in order to stem the tide of a hopeless and soul-destroying materialism engulfing this age. None of us can express gratitude enough for the boon we have received from her.

Today, we see so many of the world's religions being oppressed and often obliterated. But if we turn to the Wisdom Religion, on which Theosophy is based, we find that the essence of those religions now has a new rebirth in the West in the teachings of Theosophy. The world needs people who live Theosophy.

Mrs. P.H. Wilson
Vice-President

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

Calgary Lodge. Aino Korvela

Toronto Lodge. Jeannette Dilbey, Ronald Dilbey.

Victoria Lodge. Claire Boyd, Anni Helena Makins, David Makins.

Members-at-large. Daryl Dennis Hennessy, Phillipa M.R. Petersen.

T.G.D.

CALGARY LODGE

The Calgary Lodge looks back on a year of cooperation and study.

In September, 1975, the films, "The Universal Flame" and "How Many Lifetimes" were shown in the Calgary Public Library Auditorium for the general public. Thereafter, a study group was formed, consisting of nine people. Once a week we studied *The Secret Doctrine*, and

in the second half of the year we meditated as a group at the end of each meeting. Over the year our membership grew to seven members.

In June, 1976, another film evening was held for the public. This attracted 18 persons, and eight left their names and addresses to be contacted in September for a Fall study program.

Besides feeling that ours is a good study group, where every member shares the leadership, I think that last year we all became friends. This reminds me of one of Rabindranath Tagore's songs:

"Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not.

Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own.

Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of a stranger.

I am uneasy at heart when I have to leave my accustomed shelter:

I forget that there abides the old in the new, and that there also thou abidest.

Through birth and death, in this world or in others,

Wherever thou leadest me it is thou—the same—the one companion of my endless life,

Who ever linkest my heart with bonds of joy to the unfamiliar.

When one knows thee, then alien there is none, then no door is shut.

Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the one in the play of the many."

Laetitia van Hees
Secretary

VICTORIA LODGE

White Lotus Day was celebrated in Victoria Lodge on May 11, with readings from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, *The Voice of the Silence*, *Light on the Path* and others. The final reading was a quotation from Blavatsky, asking that we keep the "link

unbroken". The members held a short discussion as to how we, as members, can keep the link unbroken, which was vital and productive of practical ideas.

May 18 was the occasion of a visit from Mrs. Viola Law, Past President of Montreal Lodge. Readings were given by members from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and from *The Yoga of the Bhagavad-Gita*, by Prem. Following a discussion of these readings, Mrs. Law spoke to us briefly of her impressions of the Centenary Congress in New York.

Dorita Gilmour
President

A NEW T.S. SERVICE IN WESTERN CANADA

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THE SECRET DOCTRINE AND CURRENT THOUGHT

It is intended to introduce a new C.T. series in which *The Secret Doctrine* will be considered in the light of current thought in the fields of religion, philosophy and science. Specifically, the aim is to assemble ideas expressed in modern literature which could be quoted by way of illustration or elucidation of any part of Madame Blavatsky's magnum opus; or which would serve as up-to-date substitutes for any S.D. quotations taken from 19th century works.

Readers of this magazine who are students of *The Secret Doctrine* are invited to participate. Their suggestions of suitable quotations from books or articles published since 1950 should be fully identified, and the relevant pages in the S.D. should also be cited.

— Editors

ALFRED RUSSELL WALLACE NATURAL SELECTION AND THEOSOPHY

(Continued from page 58)

reality a pure myth; especially when resorted to as an explanation of the origin of species. It is merely a representative term expressive of the manner in which 'useful variations' are stereotyped when produced. Of itself, 'it' can produce nothing, and only operates on the rough material presented to 'it'...

"...The truth is that the differentiating 'causes' known to modern science only come into operation after the *physicalization of the primeval animal root-types out of the astral*. Darwinism only meets Evolution at its midway point — that is to say when astral evolution has given place to the play of the ordinary physical forces with which our present senses acquaint us. But even here the Darwinian Theory, even with the 'expansions' recently attempted, is inadequate to meet the facts of the case. The underlying physiological variation in species — one to which all other laws are subordinate and secondary — is a sub-conscious intelligence pervading matter, ultimately traceable to a REFLECTION of the Divine and Dhyān-Chohanīc wisdom." — *The Secret Doctrine* II, 648-9 or. ed., II, 685 3rd ed., IV, 219 6-vol. ed.

But Wallace remained firm in his own theories:

"None of my differences of opinion from Darwin imply any real divergence as to the overwhelming importance of the great principle of Natural Selection, while in several directions I believe that I have extended and strengthened it. The principle of 'Utility', which is one of its chief foundation stones, I have

always advocated unreservedly; while in extending this principle to almost every kind and degree of colouration, and in maintaining the power of Natural Selection to increase the infertility of hybrid unions, I have considerably extended its range. Hence it is that some of my critics declare that I am more Darwinian than Darwin himself, and in this, I admit, they are not far wrong."

— *My Life*, Vol. 2, p. 22

In the *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, answering a question, "Is form the result of the interaction of the centrifugal and centripetal forces in matter and nature?" H.P. Blavatsky said:

"Every form, we are told, is built in accordance with the model traced for it in the Eternity and reflected in the DIVINE MIND. There are hierarchies of 'Builders of form,' and series of forms and degrees, from the highest to the lowest. While the former are shaped under the guidance of the 'Builders,' the gods 'Cosmocratores,' the latter are fashioned by the Elementals or Nature Spirits. As an example of this, look at the strange insects and at some reptiles and non-vertebrate creatures, which so closely imitate, not only in their colour but by their outward shape, leaves, flowers, moss-covered branches and other so-called 'inanimate' things. Shall we take 'natural selection' and the explanations of Darwinists as a solution? I trust not. The theory of natural selection is not only utterly inadequate to explain this mysterious faculty of imitation in the realm of being, but also gives an entirely false conception of the importance of such imitative faculty, as a 'potent weapon in the struggle for life.' ... Nor is this a law but rather a frequent exception. What then but an invisible in-

telligence outside the insect can copy with such accuracy from larger originals?"

—H.P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings*,
Vol. X, pp. 387-8.

Indeed, how else to account for this example of mimicry, cited by Mr. Wallace in his *Natural Selection* (p. 58):

"A number of our small brown and speckled weevils, at the approach of any object, roll off the leaf they are sitting on, at the same time drawing in their legs and antennae, which fit so perfectly into cavities for their reception that the insect becomes a mere oval, brownish lump, which it is hopeless to look for among the similarly coloured little stones and earth pellets among which it lies motionless."

To continue the discussion of this subject recorded in the *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, the questioner asks: "But does not Mr. Wallace show that such imitation has its object in nature? That it is just this which proves the 'natural selection' theory, and the innate instinct in the weaker creatures to seek security behind the borrowed garb of certain objects? The insectivora which do not feed upon plants and leaves, will thus leave a leaf-like or moss-like insect safe from attack. This seems very plausible." To this, Madame Blavatsky replied:

"Very plausible, indeed, if, besides negative facts, there were no very positive evidence to show the unfitness of the natural selection theory to account for the phenomena of imitation. A fact to hold good, must be shown to apply if not universally, then, at any rate, always under the same conditions, e.g., the correspondence and identity of colour between the animals of one and the same locality and the soil of that region would be a general manifestation. But how about the camel of the desert with his coat of the same 'protecting'

colour as the plains he lives in, and the zebra whose intense, dark stripes cannot protect him on the open plains of South Africa, as Mr. Darwin himself admitted . . . We are asked to believe that this 'imitation of protecting colours is caused by the use and benefit it offers the imitator,' as a 'potent weapon in the struggle for life'; and yet, daily experience shows to us quite the reverse. Thus, it points to a number of animals in which the most pronounced forms of the imitative faculty are entirely useless, or worse than that, pernicious and often self-destructive. What good, I ask, is the imitation of human speech to the magpie and parrot — except leading them to be shut up in a cage? Of what use to the monkey its mimicking faculty which brings so many of them to grief and occasionally to great bodily harm and self-destruction . . .?"

—H.P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, Vol. X, pp. 388-9.

H.P.B. then goes on to cite several cases of supposed mimicry which are due to early intermediate links between certain coloured lizards and birds, between coloured vegetation and insects.

"There was a time, millions of years ago, when such 'missing links' were numerous, and on every point of the globe where life was. But now they are becoming with every cycle and generation more rare; they are found at present, only in a limited number of localities, as all such links are relics of the Past."

—*ibid.* p. 390.

Though A.R. Wallace appears to have been a member of the Theosophical Society for a time, he remained a firm devotee of a vague and confused spiritualism. He had attained great eminence and respect as a naturalist for his *Theory of Natural Selection*, and his prolific writings on a multitude of subjects, but his attempts to

synthesize spiritualism with science eroded his credibility and by the end of the century his contributions to biological theory were effectively over. (cf. *Biologist, Philosopher — A Study of the Life and Writings of A.R. Wallace*, by Wilma George.)

In 1874 Wallace published *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, which went into three editions in twenty years. With reference to this book the Mahatma K.H. wrote in 1881:

“...it (*The Occult World*, then being written by A.P. Sinnett, the recipient of this letter) is a spirited and discriminative little memoir, and, as a critical estimate of the phenomena witnessed by you personally far more useful than Mr. Wallace's work. It is at this sort of springs that Spiritualists ought to be compelled to slake their thirst for phenomena and mystic knowledge instead of being left to swallow the idiotic gush they find in the *Banners of Light* and others. The world — meaning that of individual existences — is full of those latent meanings and deep purposes which underlie all the phenomena of the Universe, and Occult Sciences — i.e., *reason* elevated to supersensuous Wisdom — can alone furnish the key wherewith to unlock them to the intellect.”

—*The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 241, or. ed., 238 3rd ed.

Similarly, in Letter No. 9, K.H. wrote: “When the first hum and dingdong of adverse criticism is hushed, thoughtful men will read and ponder over the book, as they have never pondered over the most scientific efforts of Wallace and Crookes to reconcile modern science with Spirits, and — the little seed will grow and thrive.”

In *My Life*, written in 1905, Wallace wrote of Sir William Crookes' experiences with Spiritualism: “His careful experiments, continued for several years, are to this day ignored or rejected by the bulk of scientific and public opinion as if they had never been made!” (P. 209)

However, in 1883 Sir William Crookes did join this “outermost School of the Masters” and so remained for the rest of his life. Thus it was, writing in *The Path*, November, 1891, William Quan Judge stated:

“Occultism recognizes ONE UNIVERSAL, ALL-PERVADING LIFE. Modern science recognizes life as a special phenomenon of matter, a mere transient manifestation due to temporary conditions . . .

“...it remained for Prof. Crookes to perceive the philosophical necessity of a primordial substratum, *protyle*, and so, as pointed out in the S.D., to lay the foundations of “*Metachemistry*”; in other words, a complete philosophy of physics and chemistry that shall take the place of mere hypothesis and empiricism.”

—“The Synthesis of Occult Science,” included in *Echoes of the Orient*, pp. 193-4. See also *The Secret Doctrine*, I, 620 ff., or. ed., I, 681 ff., 3rd. ed., II, 346 ff. 6-vol. ed.

SECRET DOCTRINE QUESTION AND ANSWER SECTION

(Continued from page 71)

Astral Light is, so to speak, the Linga-sarira of our earth; only instead of being its primordial prototype, as in the case of our Chhaya, or Double, it is the reverse. Human and animal bodies grow and develop on the model of their antitypal Doubles; whereas the Astral Light is born from the terrene emanations, grows and develops after its prototypal parent, and in its treacherous waves everything from the upper planes and from the lower solid plane, the earth, both ways, is reflected *reversed*.” (S.D. V, 477 6-vol. ed.)

THE CHALLENGE OF DEATH

FRANK BOUCHER

What is death?

To most Theosophists, students of the Ancient Wisdom, there is no such thing as death. Rather is it seen as the gateway to life.

Some of the best thinkers of our times have realized this, even though they may have been influenced by intolerant and narrow dogmas and doctrines. For example, Cardinal Manning once remarked that death was necessary for the perfecting of God, and many students would accept this as a Theosophical statement.

Death is the supreme process of that change which leads us from the less to the more, from the lower to the higher self. Death is, in fact, a process of growing; and if we try to understand this in connection with ourselves the fear of death departs. We are left with an inner peace "which passeth all understanding".

Sadly, for many, the mere thought of death— even the mention of the word — involuntarily induces a shudder through their bodies, and imparts a feeling of awe. Is it not significant that "Death" is often symbolized by a skeleton dressed in a dark cloak and carrying a scythe, and is called "The Grim Reaper"?

Many of the religions, playing on the ignorance and fear of their followers, have surrounded the close of human life with grim forebodings, punishment and doom. The Christian religion in particular has surrounded death with sorrow and, in spite of the teachings of Jesus, most Christians regard death as a great blow. It seems strange to me that Christians, in spite of their great claim to faith, seem to fear death more than any other civilized people — even more than many we call "uncivilized".

Now, it is obvious that death is an incident in life, so it follows that we cannot understand death without understanding

life. Ignorance is man's greatest enemy — especially ignorance of his own nature. We should heed the words of the oracle — Man, Know Thyself.

When we were young, and death took our loved ones we succumbed to tears and lamentations, and were told we would meet them again in "the sweet by and by". But as we grew older and our views changed, we learned that so-called death comes to all living things as well as mankind. In place of fear of the "after-life", we encountered doubt and began to question.

We all believe in progress, and to the Theosophist progress does not follow in a straight line but in an ever upward spiral. The seasons change from spring to spring and then continue on to yet another spring. Surely it does not take much imagination to picture mankind moving on a similar cycle: youth, maturity, old age; then, after a long rest, youth again, picking up the threads of life where we left them in the life before.

The Apostle Paul said, "I die daily", and Walt Whitman, who glorified the Spirit of Death, viewed the sombre angel as the spirit of release, the one who gives freedom from bondage and the limitation of the senses.

To the mystic, life and death are inseparable. But we are not mystics at this level, and must look upon death from a more practical point of view. To the vast majority of mankind, life means activity, growth, feeling and thinking. On this basis, therefore, we are apt to conclude that individual consciousness ends when the body dies. But what proof can be offered to support this conclusion? What do we know about "matter" and its properties to justify this assumption? The materialist demands proof of the existence of any reality besides "matter"; but we can turn right about and demand of him the proof that

“matter” has any of the properties he attributes to it.

There is no evidence that “matter” can produce life, thought or intelligence. On the other hand, our daily experiences deal continually with immaterial qualities. In our inner life, sensation, feeling, willing and thinking form the primary basis of experience. Therefore, the whole of the materialistic argument fails to impress, and we are justified in vindicating the reality of non-physical things. The failure of the materialistic argument leaves the question of death open, so we are free to consider the positive evidence of what happens when life leaves the physical body.

It is firmly established by science that force, or energy, is indestructible. I think we would all agree that life is a form of force and energy; therefore, it must continue to exist in some form or other when the body can no longer give it a vehicle of expression. Real things do not simply disappear into nothingness. How, therefore, can consciousness be destroyed?

If we study the habits and beliefs of mankind down through the ages we will find there is no race, however primitive, that does not believe in human immortality. Interestingly, the forms of this belief are strikingly similar. I know there is a tendency today to despise ancient and universally held beliefs, and that these beliefs more often than not are passed off as primitive superstition and wishful thinking. Nevertheless, this does not explain how a large segment of the human race should have gone wrong on a matter so important to its welfare.

The field of so-called psychic phenomena is a controversial one, yet after full allowance is made for misrepresentation and delusion, there remains sufficient evidence that certain human principles do survive the death of the physical body. It would be extremely difficult to explain such cases on a materialistic basis.

The mere fact of human survival leaves many questions unanswered about the manner and conditions of such survival.

Religions and philosophies have put forward a number of teachings which may be worth our while to consider in this regard.

The chief view taught to the younger generation in earlier times was that at death our hereafter would depend on how we had behaved. If we had been good, we would go to heaven — a place in the sky; or if we had been bad we would go to hell — a kind of bottomless pit. Each of these conditions was considered final, changeless.

If this were the case it would violate the law of growth which we see manifested in all nature. It also violates the law of justice, for justice requires an exact balance between “cause and effect” — the Law of Karma — and we find the doctrines of eternal rewards and punishments incompatible with it. Surely we cannot agree that the amount of “goodness” in a short human life should merit an eternal reward, and the amount of evil deserve eternal punishment, for, as the Bible tells us, “As ye sow, so shall ye reap”.

The fact that the greatest number of human beings are extremely good or extremely bad has led some religions to advocate a state of in-between heaven and hell. It is a state wherein all except those who are extremely wicked and beyond redemption might ultimately fit themselves for eternal happiness.

Certain modern religious cults uphold the idea that philosophic objections to a fixed and static eternity would be overcome by the idea of concluded progress and development in the spirit world. My objection to this is that if continuous progress towards ultimate perfection is possible for a disembodied spirit, why did that spirit have to embody itself in the first place? What would be the use or purpose of earth life in a human body anyway, if this belief be true?

Another view, and one which has appealed quite strongly to some of our poets, is that the life of man may be merged after death with the universal life of nature. Shelley, in his poem on the death of his

friend Keats, wrote:

He is a portion of that loveliness
Which he made so lovely.

While this may sound beautiful and satisfying to some temperaments it hardly stands up to an objective analysis. What part of the human personality, or individuality, would so merge with nature, and what benefit would result, either to the entity or to nature?

A much cruder idea, but one widely held in many parts of the world, is that a human soul may be reborn in a lesser form of nature, for instance, an animal, a plant or even a stone. This is entirely contrary to the Theosophical concept. Evolution is an upward spiral. The animal, vegetable or mineral kingdoms of nature do not, and cannot, display human qualities. A human soul imprisoned in such a frame would be unable to express any human traits. Consequently, what would it gain by such experience?

Still another view advanced by some is that after death we may be reborn on some other planet. To me this does not seem logical. I agree we know very little about life on other planets, and we must not absolutely deny life's existence, but why go so far afield? Whatever argument might be brought forth to support this theory would support more strongly the idea of rebirth on this earth.

This last view, then, the possibility of rebirth in a human body here on earth, referred to by Theosophists as reincarnation, is one which may be worth closer examination. The idea of our rebirth as a human being is in no way contrary to logic or experience. Human bodies are being born all the time and it seems to me it is most reasonable to explain conscious, intelligent individualities inhabiting these bodies by postulating the entrance into them of a non-physical principle — call it soul if you wish.

But whence came these souls?

Is it more reasonable to believe that a new-born body has a soul newly created for it; or that its soul is drawn from a vast

reservoir of souls already in existence — the souls of human beings who have lived and died in times gone by? If, as is obvious, the dead come from the living, where should the living come from but from the dead?

To me, this concept explains the different characteristics in human beings. Why is one born an idiot? Perhaps because the soul in that body has needed the experience — having greatly deteriorated through its own fault in former lives. On the other hand, a genius displays abilities perfected through efforts of self-improvement in many former lives. And one born in circumstances which bestow great opportunities for service, has earned the right to such advantages by humanitarian efforts in the past. Reincarnation not only provides future chances to correct the errors and failures of the present, but shows how the very difficulties now being encountered may in turn be the means whereby old scores are settled and old mistakes rectified.

When we search for the probable purpose of human life, what is more reasonable to assume that it is to provide experience and evolution for the embodied entity? Surely most would agree that the amount of experience available in a single lifetime is necessarily limited and totally inadequate.

Periodic rebirth, however, provides the means of unlimited progress and development, and if only a slight improvement is made in any one life, the total effect of such advances from life to life can lead ultimately to the attainment of that goal of perfection towards which we are all striving, and to which we shall eventually attain. So you see, death is a phase of life in the same way as life is a phase of death. It is not something of which we need be afraid.

Man's physical body requires sleep at certain periods in order to gain strength and vitality for his daily tasks. In the same way the spiritual part of man also requires sleep or rest to prepare itself for future voluntary journeys through the earthly

realm. Have you ever stopped to consider that sleep is another form of death? The Greeks used to say that sleep is an imperfect death, and that death is perfect sleep. What happens in sleep takes place in death — but perfectly so. What happens in death and after death, takes place when we sleep — but imperfectly so. What then is death but the laying aside of the physical envelope, as you might say, in which the *real* man has been encased?

All, that doth live, lives always!
 To man's frame
 As there come infancy and youth
 and age,
 So come there raisings-up and
 layings-down
 Of other and of other life-abodes,
 Which the wise know, and fear not

—*Bhagavad-Gita*

THE PERENNIAL NOW

MONTAGUE A. MACHELL

Whether he sees it as advantageous or disadvantageous, the Theosophist is confronted with the fact that in every new incarnation, (the present included), the Deathless Self is saddled with a new body and personality, to which the conditions and circumstances of life are surprising and unforeseen. The deeply hidden Self alone brings into each incarnation a basic awareness of the repetition of familiar and more or less inevitable experiences characteristic of enfleshment. It alone is fundamentally aware of that divine Karmic Thread linking all It's incarnations in an over-ruling Pattern. To the Self none of these passing and more or less superficial "crises" or "triumphs" are novel or surprising. Their significance, presumably, is measured solely in terms of their relation to spiritual fulfilment. If there is *one* state that, for the Self, fulfilment is *not*, it is "seasonal"!

All these seasons and sections of infinite time that personal man takes note of, be they joyous festivals or tearful memorials, are swallowed up and lost sight of in the Eternal Pattern of Unfoldment.

This being the case, is it not of some importance for the Theosophist to acclimatize himself to an Eternal Now, unruffled by broken snatches of time, be

they days, years, seasons or centuries — a Now wrapped in a sacred serenity by an abiding consciousness of the Self placing It's seal of immortality on the restless tides of mortal exultation and despair? Admittedly, this is a direct contradiction of all "up to the minute" reasoning, that revels in seasonal anniversaries and memorials, insisting on relieving the unendurable boredom of "passing time", by having "something happen" as often as possible, however trivial the "happening"! Equally unacceptable to the multitude is the concept of "eternal life", dedicated to the realization of an infinite spiritual potential in every man, whose activity transcends mortal life and mortal seasons.

Such considerations as these are numbered among the "aberrations" of crackpots and dreamers — people hopelessly unequipped to play a part in a world of "stern realities", notwithstanding the fact that so many of those deemed better fitted, "with their feet on the ground", enjoy little enough happiness, and rarely find a key to earthly dilemmas. Of this number, a few, at least, are led to examine life more deeply, lest they may have overlooked resources less transient and illusory. Those who have contacted the Wisdom Religion,

Theosophy, know that such resources are available, and readily accept the self-discipline necessary to tap them.

The generally admitted indispensability of a degree of uninterrupted effort and concentration to the solution of any profound problem, scientific, sociological or ethical, has direct application to the problem of self-directed evolution. The plane of consciousness most helpful to its contemplation is, of course, the spiritual, which is *beyond Time*. He who can make effective contact with this plane in his own life, has taken an important step in the direction of Inner Growth — the fundamental purpose of all living. Such a one, dismissing "past" and "future" as illusory aspects of Eternity, chooses to make Now his perennial season, convinced that *the present moment*, is, ever was, and will continue to be, his one available Season of Growth.

In our opening statement we stressed the fact that with every new incarnation the personal ego is confronted with seemingly unfamiliar experiences. The Immortal Self, on the other hand, unchanged, life after life, has its own assured rhythm and identity of purpose. A manifestation on earth of The One, It's direction and purpose are undeterred by circumstances of time and materiality — *so far as the mortal personality accepts its guidance*. Growth, then, is primarily dependent upon the degree of identity with his Immortal Self any given individual achieves — the degree to which he, as a mortal personality, allows the Self to win It's own glorious victory.

Now, *in this moment*, how many of us are lending heart, mind and intuition to the vision of the Self? How many more are "planning to do something about it next Christmas, or in the New Year"? Actually, he who catches a momentary glimpse of life's purpose, and fails to act on that glimpse, has no assurance whatsoever that such recognition shall be his next Christmas. Keeping in view the Law of Cycles,

who shall presume to foretell what point of the cycle he will have reached next year, or even tomorrow?

With a clear perception that the Spiritual Now is an eternal Now, the wise man seeks in this present moment his identity with the Self, thereby making Now the supremely sacred moment of his life — the moment of decision! It becomes *eternal* as it is given up utterly to the Eternal Self. Religion, in its purest and deepest meaning, is a conscious progress out of Time into Eternity. As such, it has nothing to do with creeds or dogmas for the simple reason that no creed has the capacity to embrace Eternity. Formulated by a mortal mind, in time, it is incapable of defining, much less dogmatizing upon, Timeless Truth, than which there is no higher religion.

Theosophy might be termed the philosophy of Eternal Truth, that is, the Truth of Now. The motive power of the Wisdom Religion, a religion timelessly pertinent and accessible, is discovery of the Self. In its divine constancy, a successfully achieved self-knowledge makes daily living the observance of an uninterrupted festival. Seasonal festivals, such as Christmas, New Year, Easter, Thanksgiving, are merely occasions upon which one bestows a deepened and enlarged sense of spiritual significance. The Theosophist does not wait for Christmas to come around, that he may *receive* added courage and assurance on the anniversary of the birth of a Savior, but that he may *demand of himself* an added exultation because of the birth of the Christ in yet fuller degree in himself.

His desire is to *give* rather than to receive. Easter's Resurrection theme is for him but an accentuation of the spiritual resurrection to which he has daily and hourly devoted personal meditation and effort. To the Theosophist Religion is that unearthly flame illumining each present moment, Now, for him, since it is *all time*, is *wholly sacred!*

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.

"The elementals in the Astral Light are reflections. Everything on earth is reflected there." (H.P.B.)

Question. (a) Re. Elementals. Reflections of what? (b) Since everything is formed from the inner planes I should have thought that the physical earth plane is reflected from the Astral. Again the Chhaya reflects and moulds the body. This implies that the Astral reflects the Physical. It may be that the Astral and Physical reflect each other?

Answer. First a direct response to query (a) — by means of the word "Prototypes". However there are several points requiring clarification, especially in connection with the term "Astral Light," for this term is used in more ways than one in *The Secret Doctrine*, especially so when "Astral Light" is used as an equivalent of Akasa — representing its lowest reaches and signifying in this aspect the Linga-sarira of the Earth. To quote:

"The astral light stands in the same relation to Akasa and *Anima Mundi*, as Satan stands to the Deity. They are one and the same thing seen from two aspects: the spiritual and the psychic — the super-ethereal or connecting link between matter and pure spirit, and the physical." (S.D.I, 197: I, 247 6-vol. ed.; I, 219 3rd ed.)

In further explanation to query (a), as well as to the opening quoted passage (which is from Vol. V, 544 6-vol. ed.)

"the Lotus plant exists not only as a miniature embryo in its seed (a physical characteristic), but its prototype is present in an ideal form in the Astral Light from 'Dawn' to

'Night' during the Manvantaric period, like everything else, as a matter of fact, in this objective Universe; from man down to mite, from giant trees down to the tiniest blades of grass.

"All this, teaches the hidden Science, is but the temporary reflection, the shadow of the eternal ideal prototype in Divine Thought." (S.D.I, 63; I, 132 6-vol. ed.; I, 92 3rd ed.)

This very same subject was discussed in "Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge" and H.P. Blavatsky gave answers to questions dealing with the Astral Light and Elementals. For example:

"Question. What is meant by prototypes existing in the Astral Light?"

"Answer. Astral Light is here used as a convenient phrase for a term very little understood, viz: 'the realm of Akasa, or primordial Light manifested through the divine Ideation.' The latter must be accepted in this particular case as a generic term for the universal and divine mind reflected in the waters of Space or Chaos, which is the Astral Light proper, and a mirror reflecting and reversing a higher plane. In the Absolute or Divine Thought everything exists and there has been no time when it did not so exist; but Divine Ideation is limited by the Universal Manvantaras. The realm of Akasa is the undifferentiated noumenal and abstract Space which will be occupied by *Chidakasam*, the field of

primordial consciousness. It has several degrees, however, in Occult philosophy; in fact, 'seven fields.' . . . The Astral Light is that which mirrors the three higher planes of consciousness, and is above the lower, or terrestrial plane; therefore it does not extend beyond the fourth plane, where, one may say, the Akasa begins.

"There is one great difference between the Astral Light and the Akasa which must be remembered. The latter is eternal, the former periodic. The Astral Light changes not only with the Maha-manvantaras but also with every sub-period and planetary cycle or Round.

"Question. Then do the prototypes exist on a plane higher than that of the Astral Light?

"Answer. The prototypes or ideas of things exist first on the plane of Divine eternal Consciousness and thence become reflected and reversed in the Astral Light, which also reflects on its lower individual plane the life of our Earth, recording it on its 'tablets.' Therefore, is the Astral Light called illusion . . .

"We may compare the Akasa and the Astral Light, with regard to these prototypes, to the germ in the acorn. The latter, besides containing in itself the astral form of the future oak, conceals the germ from which grows a tree containing millions of forms."

"... every plant — from the gigantic tree down to the minutest fern or blade of grass — has, Occultism teaches us, an Elemental entity of which it is the outward clothing on this plane. Hence, the Kabalists and the medieval Rosicrucians are always found talking of Elementals. According to them, everything possessed an Elemental sprite

"Question. What is the difference between an Elemental and a Dhyan-Chohan?

"Answer. The difference is very great. Elementals are attached only to the four terrestrial Elements and only to the two lower kingdoms of nature — the mineral and the vegetable — in which they in-metallize and in-herbalize, so to speak." (*Blavatsky Collected Writings*, X, 360-2)

In Question (b) the querent refers to the Chhaya as moulding the body. Chhaya literally means a shadow and is often used in *The Secret Doctrine* as equivalent to the Linga-sarira. Reference is also made to the Astral Light and that it is reflected from the Earth. In the quoted passage which follows the three Fires signify the three immortal principles of the human constitution, and the forty-nine Fires signify the seven aspects of the seven principles.

"First of all, remember that the Septenary of visible and also invisible Nature is said in Occultism to consist of the *three* (and four) Fires, which grow into the forty-nine Fires. This shows that as the Macrocosm is divided into seven great planes of various differentiations of Substance — from the spiritual or subjective, to the fully objective or material, from Akasa down to the sin-laden atmosphere of our earth — so, in its turn, each of these great planes has three aspects, based on four Principles, as already shown above. This seems to be quite natural, as even modern Science has her three states of matter and what are generally called the 'critical' or intermediate states between the solid, the fluidic, and the gaseous.

"Now, the Astral Light is not a universally diffused stuff, but pertains only to our earth and all other bodies of the system on the same plane of matter with it. Our

(Continued on page 64)

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