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DOLLAR-SOPHIA

Recently, a telephone caller enquired about the program of our Lodge. Apparently interested, the next question was, "How much do you charge?" The reply evidently struck a chord of disbelief. "But I always have to pay, wherever I go!" A few more words, and that was the end of the conversation. The enquirer had obviously concluded that if it does not have a price tag, Theosophy is not worth looking into.

The situation has changed little in the last hundred years. In a letter written to a member in 1886, William Q. Judge noted: "The fact is that many people in these times apply the commercial spirit to things spiritual." This attitude has apparently always been with us, and probably will continue to be with us for a long time to come.

For the most part, the general public wants excitement, and tends to avoid anything that requires individual effort. Moreover, in a materialistic society it is almost taken for granted that nothing of value is ever free. With this sort of conditioning, it is little wonder that so many people are psychologically prepared to be taken in with a "sales pitch" offering powers, salvation, or what have you. Many a good living, it seems, is to be made by selling religion and occultism.

It is indeed a pitiful state of affairs that such a large public is willing to be deceived by appeals for money in the name of religion. Scores of organizations exist to prey on this gullibility. More pity still is that in some instances the deceivers demand more than money — nothing less than the sublimation of the will of the individual. In such cases, the ancient warning of *caveat emptor*, let the buyer beware, has an additional and doubly serious meaning.

When Theosophy was presented to the public in the last century it not only provided welcome light to those in search of the spiritual path, but it also suggested a new line for charlatans. In an editorial in *Lucifer*, January, 1889, H.P. Blavatsky coined the term "Dollar-Sophia" to describe the situation. "They plagiarized from our books," she wrote, "set up sham schools of magic, waylaid seekers after truth by deceiving them with holy names, misused and desecrated the sacred science by using it to get money by various means . . ." (*H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. X, p. 280).

Even today, the number of self-styled "Masters" advertising in popular journals is amazing. Some even masquerade under the names of the adepts who taught Madame Blavatsky. The tragedy is that so

many seemingly intelligent people can be taken in by this ridiculous charlatanism.

In the same editorial, Madame Blavatsky wrote:

“Let us close by expressing a hope that our Theosophist brothers and sisters in America will pause and think . . . Above all, let them bear in mind that true occult knowledge can never be bought. He who has anything to teach, unless like Peter to Simon he says to him who offers

him money for his knowledge — ‘Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of (*our inner*) God may be purchased with money’ — is either a black magician or an IMPOSTER. Such is the first lesson taught by Lucifer to his readers in 1889.” (*ibid*, p. 285).

And still not a bad lesson for all of us to consider in 1979.

D.D.

THE LAST WORDS OF SOCRATES

ALEXANDER WILDER

“Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; pay the debt, and be sure you don’t forget it.”

It has been affirmed that the meaning of these words has been misunderstood for more than twenty-two centuries. One class of writers would have us believe that the great sage, notwithstanding his great acuteness, was still a “Pagan”, the worshipper of “false gods”. Another suggestion is that he retained till the supreme moment his inveterate habit of irony.

I am at a loss how to relate in proper terms the conjectures which are evidently so short-sighted and superficial. It would seem to the common apprehension that at such a time the dying man had done with word-conflicts, and was himself contemplating the apocalypse of existence now unfolding to him. The whole discourse of the *Phaedo* relates to this matter. What men call death is the real life, the awakening of the interior man to consciousness and the society of immortal and divine beings; and philosophy is the preparing, the schooling of ourselves for entering upon this mode of existence. Especially is this the case when the soul is

separated in a pure condition, when it leaves the body and has not been so bewitched by it as to think that nothing is real unless it is corporeal and perceptible by the physical senses.

“Every idea is a something,” he declares. It will not admit or harmonize with its own contrary; as the odd will never accept the idea of the even, or the just and musical the idea of the unjust and unmusical. So, too, that which is immortal will not admit or recognize death; and the soul, being utterly incapable of making such an admission, is accordingly itself immortal. It requires our care, therefore, not for a lifetime merely, but for all time.

Every soul has its respective demon ¹ or guardian spirit, which conducts it, after death, to its proper station. Those who have lived a life eminently holy are set free and go to supernal abodes; and there is a special beatitude for those of them who have purified themselves by philosophy — the love and pursuit of wisdom.

The conversation had reached this point when the time arrived for drinking the hemlock. The great sage complied promptly and cheerfully with the fatal

sentence; and just as the poison was completing its work, he uncovered his face and delivered the memorable charge to Crito.

To impute the common idolatry of the period to Socrates, appears out of place and without warrant. Socrates and Plato both agree, says Plutarch, that God is the ONE, having beginning from itself, sole in essence, and that he is the one only being perfectly good; all these designations and representations denoting goodness having their centre in the interior mind. Hence God is to be understood as that Mind or Spirit which is a separate idea, not mingled with matter or involved with anything having passions. "Thou shalt understand," said Socrates to Aristodemos, "that there is a Deity whose eye pierceth through all nature, and whose ear is open to every sound; extended through all places, and extending through all time; and whose bounty and care can know no other bound than those fixed by his own creation."

On the morning when he repaired to the court of the archon-king to answer for his life, he met Euthyphron — a *mantis* or diviner belonging to the sacerdotal college — who inquired why he had left the Lyceum and appeared where men were held to answer for murder and sacrilege. Socrates replied that he was there to answer the accusation of Meletos, of corrupting the young men, introducing new gods, and disbelieving in the ancient divinities. "It is because you say that a tutelary spirit constantly attends you," said Euthyphron. "He gives his accusation this shape, knowing that charges relating to innovations in worship are most readily entertained by the populace."

Euthyphron had come to denounce his own father for having murdered a slave, and, being an acknowledged authority in religious matters, Socrates proposed to be taught by him what was holy and what was sacrilegious. Euthyphron . . . proposed to find the weak side of the accuser, in order to occupy the court with a discussion about him, rather than about the defendant.

Stepping beyond such suggestions, Socrates demanded what was holy and what impiety.

"That which is pleasing to the gods is holy, and that which is not pleasing to them is impious," replied the diviner.

"An admirable answer," said Socrates. "But that which is holy is not the same as that which is unholy, but contrary to it; is it not so?"

"Assuredly," replied Euthyphron.

"Is it not said," asked Socrates, "that the gods quarrel and are at variance; that what some love, others hate? To be holy is to be just. Is the thing holy because they love it, or do they love it because it is holy? . . . Is not that which is loved one thing; and that which loves, another?"

This was too much for the priest, and he hurried away. "Hold!" cried Socrates; "you are disappointing my earnest hope of learning what things are holy and what are not, in order that I might be released from the accusation of Meletos, and lead a better life in future."

But Euthyphron, the reputed intimate of the gods, dared not wait. He had been betrayed into the acknowledgment that holiness or justice was the principle supreme over all, and, therefore, loved by the gods. Such a declaration exposed him likewise to the imputation of sacrilege, and denying the gods of the Pantheon.

It is plain, therefore, that Socrates was no worshipper of many gods, as the idea is entertained at the present time. He recognized the One whose emanation permeated higher being, and acknowledged tutelary and other spiritual beings, in subordinate spheres of existence, much as it is now the fashion to recognize angels and their subordinates.

Why, then, did Socrates command the offering to be made to Asclepios? He could not have been trifling at the supreme moment. It is equally certain that he who assigned to Justice a place above all the gods was not, in any vulgar sense, the worshipper of an infinitude of deities. Let

us contemplate the reasons which induced him.

The priest had gone his way, as happy to escape his interrogator as he was self-complacent about his errand. Socrates entered the Hall of Judgment, and heard the charges which had been preferred. He then delivered his famous *Vindication*.

"When your generals assigned me my port in Potidaia, at Amphipolis and Delion, I remained and encountered the danger of death. So when the Deity (Apollo), as I thought and believed, had set me to pass my life in the pursuit of philosophy, and in the examination of myself and others, I was not at liberty, through fear of death or anything else whatever, to desert my post . . . This duty has been assigned to me by God, by oracles, by dreams, and every mode by which any divine order has ever been enjoined on men."

The rhetor Lysis had prepared a defence, elaborate with legal skill and art, picking flaws in the indictment and pleading with the judges for lenity. But Socrates perceived himself to be prohibited by the inward voice to depart from truth and simplicity, or to seek any advantage by equivocation. When he had been condemned by a bare majority of six, and the penalty of death had been proposed, he declined to acknowledge himself to be in the wrong, to supplicate for mercy, or even to ask for a milder sentence.

"Calumny and envy have condemned me," he said. "I shall not act otherwise though I shall have to die many deaths. If I had taken part in money-making, politics, military matters, popular oratory, or public life in any form, I am too upright a man to be safe; but I have laboured to do a greater benefit to you all, by endeavouring to persuade each to excel in being good and wise. I deserve for this a public maintenance. I do not know whether death is good fortune or calamity. Shall I choose, then, what I know to be a calamity — imprisonment, a slave to the magistrates, or exile, going from city to city? I have been condemned by reason of my lack of audacity and immodest boldness."

In all this, however, he attested that he had the approval of his tutelary spirit. "Twice," he declared to Hermogenes, "twice have I attempted to take this matter of my defence under consideration, but the guardian genius always opposed me." He explains this to his judges: "I wish to make known to you the meaning of that which has just now befallen me. The accustomed voice of my guardian spirit, on every former occasion, even in the most trifling affairs, opposed me, if I was about to do anything wrong. What has just happened anyone would think, and it is supposed to be, the extreme of misfortune; yet the divine warning did not interpose when I left home this morning, nor when I came up hither to the place of trial, nor in my address when I was about to say anything, although on former occasions it has frequently restrained me when speaking. All through this proceeding it has never opposed me in anything which I said or did. I know, therefore, that what has befallen me is a blessing, and it is impossible that those of us who think death is an evil, think rightly. The fact which proves this to me is that the accustomed signal would have checked me, except that I had been about to meet with some good.

"If death is a sleep in which there is no dreaming, it would be a wonderful gain. Nights passed in sweet sleep are the most pleasant of all, and so the whole future will be but a single night of this character. If, however, death is a removal from one mode of existence to another, from this world to the underworld of the dead, I would be willing to die often. I would spend my time there questioning the people, and ascertaining who among them is wise, as I have here. Surely, for that the judges there do not condemn one to death, and those who live there are happier, in other respects, than those that are here. To a good man, nothing is a calamity, either while living or when dead; nor is his welfare neglected of God."

In this frame of mind he repaired to his prison, and calmly awaited the return of the *theoris* or sacred boat from Delos, till

which period it was not lawful to put him to death. He even refused to escape when his friends had prepared everything for the purpose, and half the people of Athens desired it. Crito himself besought him, pleading that the populace, the great multitude, are ready at any time to do a man the greatest evil unjustly, if he has been calumniated to them. "But," replied Socrates, "I have made a special compact with the Athenians, choosing to dwell here with them, consenting to submit to their government, and, indeed, actually choosing death from them in preference to exile. By violating these agreements I shall compromise my friends, and actually go counter to all the precepts of my life. I seem to hear the laws protesting, as the worshippers of Cybele seem to hear the flutes. The sound hums in my ear, and makes me incapable of hearing anything else. I will pursue this course, for the divine one leads me after this manner."

I have sometimes curiously questioned whether Socrates did not actually endeavour to obtain this dismissal from life. Xenophon has declared that, with regard to death, he was no way solicitous to importune his judges, as the custom was with others. On the contrary, he thought it the best time for him to die. That he had thus determined with himself, was still the more evident after his condemnation; for when he was ordered to fix his own penalty, he refused to do it or suffer any one to do it for him, saying that to fix a penalty implied a confession of guilt. "No disgrace can it bring on me," said he, "that others have not seen that I was innocent."

This conjecture is rendered plausible from the fact that in primitive tribes, where want is imminent and old age bur-

densome, it is usual to make way with the aged and infirm, as well as with super-numerary infants. Several of the nations of Greece had these customs. In Ceos it was the practice, when attaining sixty or seventy years of age, to put an end to life by voluntarily drinking hemlock. Socrates could not, however, resort to voluntary suicide. The philosopher, he said, should free his soul as much as he can from communion with the body, but he will not commit violence upon himself, for that is not allowable. This restriction was abrogated, however, when the magistrates took the responsibility.

He was at full liberty to expatiate on the advantages of dying while in possession of the physical faculties. "Does it not appear manifest to you," he asks Hermogenes, "that God thinks this the very best time for me to die? I have been second to no one in living uprightly, or even pleurably. But now, if my existence shall be prolonged, and I am spared to old age, what can hinder infirmities from falling upon me? My sight will grow dim, my hearing heavy; I will become less capable of learning, and more liable to forget what I have already learned; and if, in addition to all this, I shall become sensible of my decay, and bemoan myself on account of it, how can I say that I still lived pleasantly?"

"It may be too, that God, in his goodness, has appointed for me that my life shall terminate at a time which seems the most seasonable, and in the manner which shall be most eligible; for they who take charge of this matter will permit me to choose the means supposed to be the most easy, as well as free from those lingering circumstances which keep friends in anxious suspense, and fill the mind of the dying man with perturbation. Thus, when nothing offensive is left on the memory of those present, but the man is dissolved while the body is sound, and the mind capable of exerting itself benevolently, who can say that to die in this way is not most desirable?"

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The sacred boat returned from Delos, and the friends of Socrates hastened to his prison for the last time. Speedily, after his old method, the conversation was led to the great topic of philosophy, the interior life of man.

Does it appear becoming in a lover of Wisdom, he asked, to be anxious about pleasures, as of food and drink, sex, or other bodily delights, like dress or ornament? Not at all. Do the senses of the body, like sight and hearing, convey any real truth to man? It is plain that when the soul endeavours to consider anything, acting in conjunction with the body, it is led astray. It therefore retires as much as possible within itself, taking leave of the body and becoming separate from contact with it, when it endeavours to apprehend the real Wisdom — the knowledge of that which is.

“Certainly.”

“The conclusion, then, is that those who pursue the love of wisdom rightly are studying this matter of dying; and to them, of all men, death is the least formidable. The man who is grieved when about to die is not a lover of Wisdom, but a lover of his body, probably of riches and honour. Fortitude and control over the passions are eminently characteristic of philosophers.

“Necessarily so.”

They who keep their passions in subjection in order to be capable of other pleasures are but bartering the greater for the less; whereas all ought to be bartered for wisdom, the only right coin. True excellence (*arete*) subsists with wisdom, and is a purification from all these things.

In like manner, he added, those who instituted the Eleusinian Mysteries taught that the impure and uninitiated would, on their arriving in Hades, find themselves in the mire — the primitive matter from which man originated; but the purified would dwell with the gods. “There are many who carry the *narthex*, but few *entheasts*.” It is not lawful for any one who has not so pursued the love of wisdom and departed this life perfectly pure to pass into

the society of the divine beings; but only for the lovers of Wisdom.

Thus the discourse went on till the sun began to descend in the sky. Then Crito asked:

“How shall we bury you?” “Just as you please,” replied Socrates; “provided only that you are able to catch me and I do not escape from you.” Then, turning to the others, with a smile he added: “Friends, I cannot persuade Crito that I am Socrates who am now talking with you and methodizing each part of the conversation. He continues to think that I am that same thing which he will presently behold dead. So he asks how he shall bury me. I seem to have talked to him to little purpose, when I argued at such length that when I have drunk the poison I will remain no longer with you, but shall depart to the happy state of the blessed. You must become my sureties to Crito in an obligation contrary to what he undertook for me to the judges. He went bail that I should remain; you must go as sureties to him that when I die I shall not remain, but depart. Then Crito, when he sees my body burned or buried, will not be afflicted, as though I had suffered something dreadful, nor will say: ‘Socrates is laid out, carried forth, or is buried.’ Be assured, most excellent Crito, that to speak thus improperly is not only blameworthy as to the thing itself, but it likewise occasions injury of some kind to our own souls. Have good courage, then, and say that you bury my body, and bury it in a manner pleasing to you, and as you think is most agreeable to custom.”

Having drunk the mortal draught, he chided his friends for their vehement grieving. “I sent away the women,” said he, “on purpose to avoid such a scene. I have been taught that it is fortunate to have good omens when dying.” Having laid down, the servant covered him, and, after a little while, perceiving the final moment near, he pushed away the mantle and gave the charge to his friend: “Crito, I owe it to Asclepius; pay the debt, and be sure that you do not neglect it.”

"It shall be done," responded the heart-broken Crito; "but tell me, have you more to command?"

The noble sage was unable to utter more; a gasp and a convulsion followed, and he had indeed departed.

I have judged that Socrates meant more in these words than many conjecture. In the *Dialogues* preserved or compiled by Plato, he discourses much upon mind, ethics, and human immortality. He sought a criterion by which all propositions could be tested. He exhibited a rare conception of spirituality. It was not a condition induced by mere culture and discipline, according to the knowledge derived from books, teachers and observation. "I do not possess such learning," he said, "but I wish I did."

He could stand in the Agora all day, rapt in contemplation and full of the "over-soul". In his discourses with others, he sought to evolve from their minds the conception that error is an unreality, and therefore to be forsaken, while truth alone had a being. Only the spirit, the *nous* or divine entity, ² in man might apprehend this. "Essence — that which alone really is — colourless, shapeless and intangible, is visible only to the *nous* or interior mind which guides the soul." So he compelled a sceptic, by his rigorous questions, to assent to this conclusion: "Veneration alone fits the soul for the communication of divine secrets; and no others attain them except those who consult, adore and obey the Deity." If the soul had no moral reverence and certainty, the life was based on quicksand. He was no raving maniac, agitated by a sacred fury, but one who sought clear thinking rather than clear seeing. The rock should first be found on which to place the substructure of the life. Clear thinking is consistent with holiness and leads to it. There should be a reason for everything that is done, and that reason derived from certainty. Opinion and custom, even the enacting of a statute or the decree of a priest, can never stand in place of the person's own sense and knowledge of right and wrong. So Socrates

had acted when a Senator of Athens, and refused obedience to superior magistrates who commanded him to do what he was conscious was wrong.

This stubborn integrity, which looked death and disgrace steadfastly in the face, and refused to be awed thereby, which obeyed the interior guide — the divine principle from God — was triumphant in all its encounters. The hemlock did not slay Socrates. But he closed up the book of the former archaic ages and opened a new volume of life, out of which all are judged. Nobody cares what was written; no religion or school of thought goes beyond the pages of Plato. Reading there, they exclaim with a common voice:

"The Darkness has passed;

The true Light shines!"

The sceptical dream of physicists like Democritus, who would create spirit out of material atoms, establish a psychology with names alone and leaving the soul out, and ignore a Cause and a God, were sternly reprehended. "It is all guesswork," said he, "these conclusions about what the earth is made of, and how it was produced. You may speculate about the floor of the firmament, what the stars are, how the winds blow, and whether the world is a colossal tortoise paddling around in the supernal ether, but you can not *know* anything about it. We can, however, learn something about ourselves. We can know what virtue is, where peace may be found, whether there is such a thing as justice, as truth, and whether man was made for a higher walk and destiny than a beaver and a goat."

What a rebuke to the so-called "exact science" of our day, so unsatisfactory because it is, and inevitably must be, incomplete and inexact. Our scientists explore stars, rivers and rocks in the quest of the material of knowledge; but in their conception God is a figment of the imagination, the soul a region of haze, the law of right something which nobody is sure about, and conscience an echo of passions and desires upon whose voice it is not safe to play. Accordingly, in their

purview, our bones are our noblest part, and receive from them the most attention. So reasoned not Socrates; so no philosopher worthy of the title ever reasoned. With him Wisdom was all — the perception of ideas inborn in the interior mind from the Eternal Source, and ascertained by a faculty of vision from which external sense was excluded.

All this was shadowed forth in the Eleusinia. The worshippers were first purified and sworn to fidelity. They were afterward permitted to view mythic scenes and exemplars, which impressed the imagination, producing a state of mind favourable to learning somewhat of the inner life of Man. The many were satisfied with awe-inspiring ceremonies and the reverence paid to ancestral spirits. Demeter, represented as the sorrowful Achtheia weeping for her daughter ravished away by the Lord of Death, only impressed such as apprehended what Gautama-Buddha showed the sorrowing mother, that there was a loved one dead in every home.

Farewell thou Kora! Joy will come with gay and festive Iachos. The flute of the Korybant and the shout of the multitude exhilarate hearts enfeebled by woe, and even intoxicate the imagination. But how many such, carrying wands and torches, enter the Mystic Cave and come forth epoptic — the true seers of Wisdom? "Few!" replies the initiator; "Many are the called, few the elect!" But philosophy, the Wisdom known by the elect, transcends all; she is justified by her children.

In the Eleusinian Rites there is mercy shadowed forth for those who came late. Even the Overlord of the Nabatean *Gospel* gave full pay to the labourers who worked faithfully, though only from the eleventh hour. When the Great Day of the Festival was over, and the thousands of worshippers had been dismissed, a special rite was observed for the benefit of those who had only just arrived. Herakles had been so favoured by Eu-Molpous at Ageai; and even the later orgy of Iachos, or old

Dionysos born anew as a son of the Great Mother, ³ was added to the Eleusinia. Finally, perhaps to blend them all in one, an initiatory ceremony in honour of Asclepios was also instituted.

This divinity was Phoenician, the Apollo or Overlord of Palestine. He dwelt in underground temples, often elaborately constructed, and was renowned for wisdom and the marvellous gifts which he bestowed on his worshippers. His shrines were the hospitals of the early world; legions of spirits aided to unroll the scroll of destiny and reveal the arcane sources of disease. His rod and staff comforted the sick and despairing. Having been naturalized in Greece as the son of Apollo, his temples and priests abounded over the country, with rites and mysteries of their own. In due time they were associated with the worship of Demeter and Poseidon at Eleusis.

"What the Eleusinia furnished to Greece," says a distinguished writer, "that Socrates furnished to himself. That man who could stand stock still a whole day lost in contemplation, what was the need to him of the Eleusinian veil? The most self-sufficient man in all Greece, who could find the way directly to himself and to the mystery and responsibility of his own will without the medium of external rites — to whom there were the ever present intimations of his strange divinity — what need to him of the Eleusinian revealings and their sublime self-intuition (*autopsia*)?"

Indeed, Socrates had accomplished in his own career everything which the mystic orgies represented. His stern self-examination was equivalent to the purifying at the First Rites. The sow offered by his favourite pupil Alcibiades, was washed and again returned to her favourite wallow; Critias bore the *narthex*, but failed at the door of the *Sekos* ⁴ of the sorrowing goddess, and so was not born into the truer life; and even the better men generally did not transmit the new light without imparting to it *their own prismatic shadow*. If there was any exception it was Plato.

Socrates himself entered the chamber of Esnum-Asclepius, as we must all go thither, alone. He feared no evil; to him death was not a calamity but a boon. It released him from the body, now an encumbrance to the vigorous soul, which had been seeking to withdraw from it, and transferred him where he might gaze upon the arcane of real Being. This led him to bethink himself of the peculiar offering, and to command Crito to bestow it. It was as though he had said: "I am now an initiate of Asclepius, the god of life, wisdom and healing; the apocrypha of destiny is now becoming plain to me; the apocrypha of the Great Mystery has come."

The evening had become the morning, and Crito now knew what his great Master had before remarked his not perceiving — that Socrates was in the Mystic Chamber, in the presence of the Divine Hierophant!

A gill of poison cannot extinguish a soul. There may come instead a clairvoyant insight. No more was destiny veiled in the enigma of the Sphinx. As Oedipus had come, Crito need hesitate no longer to give the offering to Aiskulapiu, the son of Zedek, with healing in his wings. Socrates lives — lives not merely in his loyalty to divine ideas and his interior guide, not simply in men's memories or even in their like devotion, but in actual personal immortality — at one with the One. So, too, the word is for ourselves; we shall live in perennial life, beyond Time, with the Infinite.

entity or guardian, the *deus in nobis*; and the body, the seat of the epithumetic principle. Paul, the great Christian Apostle, follows this same distinction, ascribing all evils to the heart or flesh, and supreme good and benefit to the spirit. "In my flesh dwells no good; I delight in the living God after the inward man." A.W.

² Anaxagoras taught before Plato and Socrates that the *Nous*, or *Anima Mundi*, originated all things. It seems that he borrowed this idea from Egypt, where it was entertained, even the designation *nous* being apparently the same as *nout*, the Coptic name of the Divinity as an interior intelligence. The Ionian and Egyptian taught alike. Even the Apostle Paul declared: "We have the *nous* of Christos," evidently meaning a common spirit or divine principle actuating them all. A.W.

³ Demeter, from Sanskrit Devamatr, or Lakohmi, the Mother of Gods. Cybele, or Rhea, the Phrygian goddess, was another representation of the same character, and the worship of both exhibited close resemblances.

⁴ In the Hebrew sacred books this term is *Succoth*, a pun on the booths where the worship was celebrated, *Suku* being the Akkadian designation of the Babylonian Venus or Ista. Her temples were originally subterranean, and hence the term *sekos* denoted the innermost recess, and by metaphor the womb of the Universe.

— *The Platonist*, April, 1881

¹ The *nous* or interior mind. In the Cratylus Socrates explains that *daemon* is a term denoting wisdom; and that every good man is daimonian, both while living and when dead, and is rightly called a *daimon*. Menandros explicitly declares that "the *nous* is the *daemon*," or tutelary. I accordingly accept the tripartite distinction, which makes the *psyche* or soul the selfhead or individual identity; the *nous*, spirit, or interior mind, the divine

"According to Plato, the highest God, whom in the Republic he calls *the good*, and in the Parmenides *the one*, is not only above soul and intellect, but is even superior to being itself. Hence, since everything which can in any respect be known, or of which anything can be asserted, must be connected with the universality of things, but the first cause is above all things, it is very properly said by Plato to be perfectly ineffable."

— Thomas Taylor.

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. In the article on Animals and Reincarnation (in the September-October issue) I am not exactly clear about the difference between what is going on or takes place during a minor pralaya (mere obscuration?) and a major one (akin to Nirvana?)

Answer. If the questioner implies that "obscuration" during the period of a minor pralaya signifies absence of evolutionary activity, and that a major pralaya signifies a state "akin to Nirvana" (to use the terms of the questioner) for the monads, the statement is in agreement with the concepts given in *The Secret Doctrine*.

In further explanation: a planetary system (such as the Earth planetary system) consists of seven Globes, on each one of which the Kingdoms undergo seven stages of evolutionary activity. The passage of the Kingdoms from the first to the seventh Globe signifies the accomplishment of one Round.

"After Pralaya, whether the great or the minor Pralaya (the latter leaving the worlds in *status quo*), the first that re-awakes to active life is the plastic Akasa." (S.D. I, 18; I, 83 6-vol, ed.; I, 46 3rd ed.) ("In *status quo*" means: in its present condition, and the quotation continues.) "It is not the physical organisms that remain in *status quo*, least of all their psychical principles, during the great Cosmic or even Solar pralayas, but only their Akasic or astral 'photographs'. But during the minor pralayas, once overtaken by the 'Night', the planets remain intact, though dead, as a huge animal, caught and embedded in the polar

ice, remain the same for ages." (*Ibid.*)

"... after an absolute pralaya, or when the pre-existing material consists but of ONE element, and BREATH 'is everywhere', the latter acts from without inwardly; after a minor pralaya, everything having remained in *status quo* — in a refrigerated state, so to say, like the moon — at the first flutter of manvantara, the planet or planets begin their resurrection to life from within outwardly." (S.D. I, 12; I, 77 6-vol. ed.; I, 40 3rd ed.)

Question. In regard to the statement which was quoted from H.P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, Volume X, pages 360-1 that "The Astral Light changes not only with the Mahamanvantaras but also with every sub-period and planetary cycle or Round" — in what way do these changes affect the reincarnating entities? And what are these changes?

Answer. The changes will occur by means of the Tattvas (signifying the Element Principles) which are changed by means of an additional Tattva which is brought into activity in every Round. Just as an additional Tattva was brought into the evolutionary activity of the beings during the present Fourth Round, therefore in the next Round there will definitely be changes in the vehicles (or bodies) of the reincarnating entities during the Fifth Round.

The enumeration of the Tattvas provides for three more Elements which are as yet unknown and which will be developed in their fullness in future ages — since the

(Continued on page 141)

NOTES AND COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY

I very much regret to report the death of Vera Berry in Toronto on November 22. The wife of Fleet Berry, President of the Toronto Theosophical Society, she herself was also very active in the affairs of the Lodge, and had been a member of the Lodge Board of Directors for several years. Many of us have cause for deep gratitude to Vera, whose cheerful spirit was infectious, and who could be counted on to radiate light when all seemed gloomy.

A beautiful and fitting memorial service for Vera was prepared by Joan Sutcliffe and George Lowrie. Vera's friends will surely agree that their tribute, "Hers was the spontaneous outflow of a loving heart and an intelligent mind", is particularly apt.

To Fleet and others of Vera's family go the loving thoughts of all the members in Canada who knew her.

* * *

Just as this issue was going to press I learned of the death of Charles Potter. He joined the Society in 1922, and was a member of the Hermes Lodge in Vancouver.

* * *

A business meeting took me to Toronto in mid-December, and once again thanks to the co-operation of the Directors in Ontario it was possible to use this opportunity to hold a Board of Directors meeting. This took place on December 14.

There was very little on the agenda, but it was gratifying to be able to have a general discussion on various matters pertaining to the Society. One item of business transacted at the meeting was the authorization of the publishing of "The Sleeping Spheres", about which more is said elsewhere in this column.

* * *

Jasper Niemand's article, "The Sleeping Spheres", was published serially in five issues of *The Canadian Theosophist* in the Spring of 1953. The article deals with Devachanic spheres and experience, and is considered an important contribution to a study of this aspect of Theosophy.

The first part of the article was published in *The Path*, July, 1893; the longer second part several years later in *The English Theosophist*. (The C.T. reprint includes an interesting description of how the second part was finally found after a long search.) The late Willem Roos, then of Mexico City, provided this material which was published together with his own helpful commentary.

In recent years there has been much talk of the desirability of reprinting "The Sleeping Spheres". However, our magazine is now published bi-monthly, not monthly as in 1953, and the length of the article and commentary requires the space of nearly the whole of a single issue. It was therefore concluded that a separate publication should be considered, and this has now been completed. It is a "paste-up" of the 1953 printing, and is complete, including the introductory remarks by the then Editor, Dudley W. Barr. The only changes that have been made is the relocation of Mr. Roos' notes closer to the text to which they refer.

That this material is once again available will be welcomed by serious students. It should be particularly timely in light of the current interest in the after-death states. Copies of the reprint are available from this office for \$1.00 including postage.

* * *

While in Toronto I met for the first time Mr. Michael Freeman, who was there on vacation from his home near Vernon, British Columbia, where his labour of love is the H.P.B. Library. I was pleased to learn from him that he had just completed arrangements for the reprinting of Mrs. Alice Leighton Cleather's book, *H. P. Blavatsky — A Great Betrayal*.

Other important publications of the H.P.B. Library include the Peking Edition

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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.

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of *The Voice of the Silence*, and two other books of Mrs. Cleather's: *H.P. Blavatsky — As I Knew Her* and *H.P. Blavatsky — Her Life and Work for Humanity*.

A new Canadian flag has been sent to the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, for use on occasions when flags of all nations are flown. The flag is the gift of a former member of the Canadian Section, now

living in the United States, Mr. Michael Ciemny. On a visit to Adyar he noticed that the former Canadian ensign was still being used, and asked us to arrange for a replacement.

It gives me much pleasure to welcome Mrs. Marjory Stevens, of Toronto Lodge, into the fellowship of the Society.

T.G.D.

CALGARY LODGE

After starting our new term under the inspiration of Gordon Plummer, we resumed our regular study program. We meet on Thursday evenings at 8 p.m., starting with Meditation, followed by a study of *The Secret Doctrine* and concluding with a short reading and discussion on *The Voice of the Silence*. The leadership of the study group rotates weekly on a voluntary basis. Two new students have joined, while two regular members have dropped out for the time being due to other commitments, leaving our attendance at the mystic number seven.

On Sunday, December 10 we were invited to join with the members of Lotus Lodge for a pre-Christmas gathering at the home of Mrs. Hilda Pawson. After each contributed a reading or some seasonal thoughts we enjoyed a social time together.

On Thursday, December 21 we met in Mrs. Aino Korvela's new home for our Christmas meeting. Mrs. Doris Davy prepared a program of readings from "The Christmas Story", by Geoffrey Barborika, and from the writings of Dudley Barr, after which several members talked about traditional ways of celebrating Christmas in their home countries. Two Finnish ladies were special guests, one being a member of

the Finnish Theosophical Study Group in Vancouver and she brought warm greetings from those members. They also entertained us with some beautiful Finnish songs. The evening was concluded with refreshments served by our hostess.

The Lodge is hoping to make an arrangement with a local bookstore to carry specific titles of Theosophical literature. This is a similar program to that operated successfully for several years by the Edmonton Lodge. The stock will be financed through voluntary contributions of the Lodge members.

Laetitia van Hees
Secretary

VICTORIA LODGE

Our Fall season has concentrated on a study of *Bhagavad-Gita*, with the help of the commentaries by Sri Krishna Prem, Ernest Wood and William Q. Judge, to round out our discussions. Most of the people attending, both members and friends, participate in the class, and the tone of the whole meeting is always serious and impersonal.

On Tuesday, December 12 we shall hold our last meeting of the year. We will have a winter Solstice theme, with suitable readings and music, with refreshments to follow. One of our members, Beth Cooil, has made a very good recording with a friend, on piano and organ, of Christmas carols, and another member, Alice Smith, is to sing the Huron carol with the recorded accompaniment.

Our *Secret Doctrine* study group (now 5) meets every Thursday morning for two hours, and is going very well. Dorothy Armstrong helps all of us by doing a lot of research for each meeting, and is a veritable mine of information pertinent to our study.

Dorita Gilmour
President

MONTREAL LODGE

Gordon Plummer arrived in Montreal on the afternoon of October 24. On the following evening the Lodge presented a public lecture by Mr. Plummer in the Atwater Library. The subject was "Beyond the 'Big Bang'." In spite of the postal strike, which had curtailed our advertising, there were 30 in attendance.

On Thursday, October 26, Mrs. Elizabeth Smith invited Gordon, Viola Law and myself to luncheon. Mrs. Law is a former Secretary and President of the Lodge, who now lives in Ottawa. That evening, a meeting of members was held in my home, where Gordon conducted a study group.

We were all delighted to have Gordon with us. As well as his lecture and study class, he instructed us with the help of a slide presentation, and entertained us with his "magic". His visit was thoroughly enjoyed by all who met him.

Fred T.A. Griffiths
Treasurer.

HOME STUDY COURSE

A Theosophical correspondence course is now available to Canadian readers. It is offered to new students of Theosophy, especially those who are unable to participate in local study groups.

Further information may be obtained by writing HOME STUDY, 1040 Sutlej Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 2V8.

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LETTER TO THE EDITORS

The Editors

The Canadian Theosophist

While I was in Toronto recently, I was invited to participate in a discussion group that was interested in the formation and conduct of Theosophical study groups. In the course of the meeting, the question was asked: "Should we study the writings of Alice Bailey in our study groups?" May I share with your readers the substance of my reply?

There is increasing interest in the books by Alice Bailey, and for this reason, we should examine very carefully the place that her writings may or may not have in our Theosophical work. First of all, let me say that the Theosophical Society, as the outward expression of the Theosophical Movement, must be a centre of learning, to which serious minded people can come to learn the basic teachings of the Ancient Wisdom as brought to us by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky under the direction and guidance of her teachers. Therefore it is important that we present to all, whether they be inquirers or dedicated students, a clear picture of Theosophy. It must appeal to all as a sane and rational way of life founded upon a philosophy that is based upon universal principles in the same sense that the science of mathematics is based upon universal principles. Such a presentation of Theosophy is not made dogmatically, as this would defeat its primary principle, the awakening of the human mind to the end that each student uses his own understanding and willpower in order to achieve higher levels of growth.

Let us consider for a moment what happens when someone goes to a university and enrolls in a class of Mathematics. While he is in the classroom he will get mathematics and nothing else. He will not get numerology, astrology, palmistry, the Tarot cards, and so on. He will receive just what he came for. Nevertheless, in the Library he will find books on all subjects, and he is free of course to read as many of

these as he likes. However, he does not bring them to the classroom. But, there are courses in Comparative Religion, in which many systems of thought will be explored. These will not be confused with his course in Mathematics, nor are the several systems of religious thought to be presented with the idea of indoctrinating the student, but rather to increase his understanding of the various manners in which people express themselves in their religious life. Such a course has great value.

With this in mind, I would like to suggest that a Theosophical study group should be exactly that so that there is no confusion in the minds of the students as to what the Ancient Wisdom is. If the basic teachings are adhered to, using the best and the most reliable books from which to study, and are carried on for one full year, and it is felt that the students have a standard by which they can assess the value of other presentations which differ in a number of areas from the standard presentations of H.P. Blavatsky and the Mahatmas, then it might be useful to take up the writings of a number of exponents of their own schools, such as Alice Bailey, Rudolf Steiner, or any others that might come to mind. These would be studied with the same attitude of mind that one studies comparative religions, that is for the purpose of understanding what other people are studying. This could be a worthwhile experience.

We must never lose sight of the final injunction laid upon us by H.P.B. Her last words were: "Do not let my last incarnation be a failure. Keep the link unbroken."
L. Gordon Plummer

The whole essence of truth *cannot be transmitted from mouth to ear*. Nor can any pen describe it, not even that of the recording Angel, unless man finds the answer in the sanctuary of his own heart, in the innermost depths of his divine intuitions.
— H.P. Blavatsky

THE THEOSOPHIC LIFE

AS DEFINED BY H.P. BLAVATSKY

(Notes for a talk at the T.S. in America Annual Convention, July, 1978)

"It is easy to become a Theosophist. Any person of average intellectual capacities, and a leaning toward the metaphysical; of pure, unselfish life, who finds more joy in helping his neighbour than in receiving help himself; one who is ever ready to sacrifice his own pleasures for the sake of other people; and who loves Truth, Goodness and Wisdom for their own sake, not for the benefit they may confer — is a Theosophist."

— "Practical Occultism", in *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings, Vol. IX, p. 155.*

It's easy to become a Theosophist! Those are the words of H.P. Blavatsky. She had a great sense of humour, and was no doubt indulging in a little good-natured irony when she wrote that passage. Certainly, when you read past the opening sentence, the qualifications she lists seem, on the contrary, exceedingly difficult to achieve. For let us not delude ourselves: a pure, unselfish life is beyond the present attainment of most of us; and how many sacrifice their own pleasures for the sake of others — not just once in a while, that is, but constantly? When it comes to Truth, Goodness and Wisdom, well, we may aspire to them as desirable goals, but our motive in so doing may be very remote from that prescribed by Blavatsky.

These are very high ideals, and few there are who deserve the appellation Theosophist using this definition. Indeed, many of the most serious followers of Blavatsky prefer in all humility to call themselves students of Theosophy, rather than Theosophists. Most of us, if we are honest with ourselves, will admit that at our stage of development it is, alas, very difficult to become a Theosophist.

Difficult, but not impossible. We know it is not impossible, if we have sighted the Theosophic beacon, which is proof in itself that others have made the great achievement. Perhaps not many, but the few who have, and who selflessly have

delayed their spiritual journeys to help us, to guide us, should be all that we need for inspiration.

The very fact that we are aware of our true position should be cause for encouragement. If we *know* the Theosophic life is difficult, and that it is for all time, not just a passing fad, it means that we are at last coming out of the fog. Though the course ahead is arduous, this is a time for optimism. After all, that beacon light is in place. Our job is to steer directly for it, rough waters regardless, and not be tempted by the apparent calm seas close to the treacherous shoals, and not lured by the false attractions of other ports along the way.

Although we are dealing with a highly idealistic code of conduct, the approach is nevertheless a practical one. It can be applied; it should be applied; it *must* be applied, in every aspect of our daily life. It is for real life, not for dreams.

Real life. When you consider the trials Blavatsky went through before 1875, as well as after — and her life is a study which in itself can be very edifying — it is evident that she had much experience in down-to-earth matters. And this doesn't refer to her readiness to swear like a trooper when the occasion warranted it. She showed by her own example how it is possible to lead the Theosophic life, even under circumstances

that make most of our problems seem puny by comparison.

Blavatsky practised what she preached. With her, it wasn't a case of "Don't do as I do: do as I say". With her, the law of right living was clear and unequivocal, impossible to misinterpret, and she obeyed it singlepointedly and with tenacity.

However, we are not here to sing the praises of H.P. Blavatsky. She was the last person who would want to be put on a pedestal. But we can learn from her example even though, enigma that she is, the most careful study of her life and work fails to reveal *all* the clues that are necessary to understand the mystery that was — that is — H.P.B. Yet one aspect of her life is perfectly clear: she invariably acted in strict accord with the principles of Theosophy.

In this, she represents a level of human evolution somewhat ahead of ours. A level that most of humanity is unlikely to reach for ages to come. So to us, she is a beacon and an exemplar. From her words we can consider what she had to say about living the life, and draw our own conclusions as to its rightness. From her example, we can be inspired to set our own goals for spiritual development.

It should be well worth while, then, to explore the entrance to the path she showed, and give some thought to what has to be done in preparation for the journey. Supposing we do earnestly aspire to the Theosophic life, what are the qualities required of us? What are the conditions we must meet? To answer these questions, let us look briefly at some of the instances when H.P.B. referred directly or indirectly to the development of consciousness at the spiritual level — which is the outcome of living the Theosophic life.

If we wanted to find a single word with which to sum up the Theosophic Life, it would be altruism. In the Oxford Dictionary, altruism is defined as

"Devotion to the welfare of others; regard for others as a principle of

action. Opposed to egoism or selfishness."

This term is perfect for use in the context of Theosophic living. Especially as it is described as a principle of action. No doubt most of us are good at thinking about unselfishness, but practising it is another matter.

Devotion to the welfare of others. Regard for others as a principle of action. Altruism. Altruism is a word mentioned frequently in Theosophic writings. Here are some examples:

"... true Occultism or Theosophy is the 'Great Renunciation of SELF', unconditionally and absolutely, in thought as in action. It is ALTRUISM, and it throws him who practises it out of calculation of the ranks of the living altogether. 'Not for himself, but for the world he lives', as soon as he has pledged himself to the work."

— "Occultism versus the Occult Arts", in *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. IX, p. 254.

And this thought:

"It is *altruism*, not *ego-ism* . . . that can lead the unit to merge its little Self in the Universal Selves."

— *ibid*, 258.

And this, which seems addressed particularly to us:

"No working member should set too great value on his personal progress or proficiency in Theosophic studies; but must be prepared rather to do as much altruistic work as lies in his power. He should not leave the whole of the heavy burden and responsibility of the Theosophical Movement on the shoulders of the few devoted workers. Each member ought to feel it his duty to take what share he can in the common work, and help it by every means in his power.

"No Theosophist should place his personal vanity, or feelings, above

those of his Society as a body. He who sacrifices the latter, or other people's reputations on the altar of his personal vanity, worldly benefit, or pride, ought not to be allowed to remain as a member. One cancerous limb diseases the whole body."

— *The Key To Theosophy*, p. 252.

In passing, this reference to our membership, to our commitment to the Society, and indeed to the whole Theosophical Movement, as H.P.B. mentions, is in order to quote to a gathering of members such as this. You do not have to join the Society in order to be a student of Theosophy; but if you are a member, you owe something to the organization. In this regard, the T.S. usually provides valuable experience and ample opportunity for those who wish to test the waters of Theosophic living.

It's easy to become a Theosophist! Yet . . . the degree of unselfishness implied in the word "altruism" is surely to be rated as the most difficult of achievements. Rare is the person who earns the epithet altruistic; rare even are examples of specific deeds whose motive is purely altruistic.

This subject leads directly to consideration of fellow humanity on a larger scale, and the necessity of putting into practice the First Object of the Society.

If we want to measure the Theosophical reliability of any statement purporting to be of a spiritual implication, one of the first things to look for is its consistency with the doctrine of the Unity of all Being. This doctrine is basic to the Theosophic philosophy, and is to be found with repeated frequency, expressed in many different ways, among the thousands of pages Blavatsky wrote for our edification.

In order to understand the Divine Plan, even in the most simple form, Unity is one of the keys we must apply. Unity, Oneness, is certainly not the easiest of concepts to grasp because we are still conditioned with the typical human tendency to cultivate separateness — which is one of the factors

that make altruism a remote quality in our lives. But once we accept the reality of Cosmic Unity and Universal Brotherhood, many doors of understanding open up for us. By accepting the reality of Unity, much more is meant than merely giving lip service to the Society's First Object. Our lives must be lived in accordance with the reality. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to find in Blavatsky's writings the implication that the Theosophic Life, which eventually must be followed by all Humanity, embraces Unity in a practical, as well as in a conceptual sense. And here we might reconsider that short quotation where she mentioned "altruism . . . that can lead the unit to merge its little Self in the Universal Selves".

This is where we really get down to the basics. Just consider this very simple, but very pertinent observation in *The Key to Theosophy*:

" . . . if the action of one reacts on the lives of all, and this is the true scientific idea, then it is only by all men becoming brothers and all women sisters, and by all practising in their daily lives true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity, which lies at the root of the elevation of the race, can ever be attained. It is this action and interaction, this true brotherhood and sisterhood, in which each shall live for all and all for each, which is one of the fundamental Theosophical principles that every Theosophist should be bound, not only to teach, but to carry out in his or her individual life."

— *The Key To Theosophy*, p. 234.

and this one:

" . . . a true Theosophist must put in practice the loftiest moral ideal, must strive to realize his unity with the whole of humanity, and work ceaselessly for others."

— *ibid*, p. 25

elsewhere, she expressed it in these terms:

“ . . . he who would profit by the wisdom of the universal mind, has to reach it through *the whole of Humanity* without distinction of race, complexion, religion or social status.” — “Occultism versus the Occult Arts”, in *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. IX, p. 258.

This leads naturally to our direct relationships with others, in which the Theosophic Life is tempered by Karma, and put daily to the test. As part of the human brotherhood, we are faced with obstacles both natural, arising out of the evolutionary process, and manmade obstacles. Altruism is here required to be demonstrated at a very practical level. Such daily relationships are fundamental experiences in living the Theosophic life, and are dealt with by Blavatsky in matter-of-fact and conscience-pricking terms in several places. Just one example, a useful one, because it pertains to human failings that are common to all situations: family, factory, school, office, workshop — or the T.S. She wrote:

“ . . . true or false, no accusation against another person should ever be spread abroad. If true, and the fault hurts no one but the sinner, then leave him to his Karma. If false, then you will have avoided adding to the injustice in the world. Therefore, keep silent about such things with every one not directly concerned. But if your discretion and silence are likely to hurt or endanger others, then I add: *Speak the truth at all costs*”

— *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 255.

Good and useful advice, and it reminds us that another aspect of the Theosophic quest is striving after Truth. Truth with a capital T. Absolute truth. But at the level of daily living, the pursuit of relative truth is also a Theosophic imperative.

It's easy to become a Theosophist!

What has been discussed to this point could be classified as guidelines to

Theosophic behaviour. We have been looking at the building blocks of a Theosophic life. Now it is time to turn our attention to the builder. This is where we find out that the Theosophic life is not merely reacting to circumstances; that it cannot be lived without some positive action on our part.

The signal for action is to be found in the Proem of *The Secret Doctrine*. It is that magnificent statement in the Third Fundamental Proposition, where the meaning and purpose of man's existence is described in a way that directs us to the very essence of the Theosophic Life. Familiarity with this passage can never breed contempt with it, so let us remind ourselves what it says, in part:

“ . . . the Secret Doctrine teaches: —

the fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Oversoul . . . ; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul . . . through the Cycle of Incarnation (or “Necessity”) in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term. In other words, no purely spiritual Buddhi (divine Soul) can have an independent (conscious) existence before the spark which issued from the pure Essence of the Universal Sixth principle, — or the OVER-SOUL, — has (a) passed through every elemental form of the phenomenal world of that Manvantara, and (b) acquired individuality, first by natural impulse, and then by self-induced and self-devised efforts (checked by its Karma), thus ascending through all the degrees of intelligence, from the lowest to the highest Manas, from mineral and plant, up to the holiest archangel (Dhyani Buddha).

— *The Secret Doctrine*, I, 17.

It goes on to say:

“ . . . The pivotal doctrine of the Esoteric philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in man,

save those won by his own Ego through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations."

— *ibid.*

There it is, in a nutshell. "Self-induced and self-devised efforts". No one can live the life for us. No god, man or organization can do it for us. Spiritual development is an individual responsibility. Grave as that responsibility is, the conscious realization we are the captains of our own souls, as it were, is a most liberating and joyous thought. Once this message is understood, once we are aware of its inner truth, it means the soul can at last free itself from the shackles that have restricted it for so long. From here on, though the journey is hard, we steer our own course and proceed at our own pace. No more drifting with the tide.

In one of her earliest writings after commencing her labours on behalf of Theosophy, Blavatsky gave to those she described as "fervent and persevering candidates for the Hermetic Philosophy" a word of advice: Try and Become. The word try is another essential ingredient of the practical Theosophic Life. It is indispensably linked to the self-induced and self-devised efforts we must put forth if we are ever to reach the goal of conscious spirituality.

In this connection is an important lesson we have to master. It is this: that try as we may to further our spiritual development, it is the effort itself that is important, not the result. Success and failure are relative, and it is doubtful anyway if at our stage we really understand what succeeds and what fails. It is a hard lesson to learn, especially conditioned as we are by the materialistic world to produce tangible results, and win, win, win. But whether we think we have won or lost, there is no letting up. Try, try and try again might well be the motto for all aspiring to the Theosophic Life.

"No special gifts save those won by our own personal effort". The very repetition of

the word "effort" reinforces the sense of obligation; but the spirit of independence it gives is reward enough if we discharge that obligation. Earlier, Blavatsky had written:

"Be what he may, once that a student abandons the old and trodden highway of routine, and enters upon the solitary path of independent thought — Godward — he is a Theosophist; an original thinker, a seeker after the eternal truth with 'an inspiration of his own' to solve the universal problems." — "What Are The Theosophists?" in *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. II, pp. 102-3.

By no means have we exhausted the list, but a stop must be made somewhere, so just a brief mention of one last attribute necessary for living the Theosophic Life. It is what might be called "The Fighting Spirit", but it has nothing to do with being belligerent to one's fellows. In an instruction to one of her pupils, H.P.B. wrote:

"The 'Kingdom of Heaven', which I need not tell you is but the dominion of man's immortal spirit over the inner forces of the Universe, must be taken by violence. I am sorry to be compelled to tell you that the prize of Wisdom and Power must be won through danger, trial, temptation, the allurements of sense, and all the besetments of this world of matter which they counterpoise."

— *Theosophical Forum*, Vol. XV, No. 1, July 1939, "Blavatsky's instructions to a Neophyte". Quoted in *When Daylight Comes*, by Howard Murphet.

That is hardly calculated to convert the masses to Theosophy, but it is the very truth. To those who habitually take the line of least resistance, such a frank statement will be distasteful and unacceptable. They are apparently not perturbed — if indeed they are even aware — that the line of least resistance is a circle, which leads them nowhere. But when finally the inner reality

of the teaching gets through to them, they can take heart, because the very will to develop the fighting spirit carries with it instantaneous benefits.

You will be able to find many references to this fighting spirit throughout Blavatsky's works, and especially in *The Voice of the Silence*. And speaking of *The Voice*, you might well wonder: here we have been talking about the Theosophic Life for half an hour or more, and there has not been a single familiar quotation from that precious little work.

The omission has been deliberate. *The Voice* is dedicated to the Few. The Theosophic life is really no more than an overture to the more difficult pilgrimage for which *The Voice of the Silence* gives instruction. Not that we should not study it: its inspiring language cannot but help the mind and heart of the dedicated student, but even without *The Voice*, we have enough from H.P.B.'s pen to last us this lifetime and many to follow.

The Theosophic Life is an extremely serious undertaking, but it is not solemn. It need not be solemn. Nor should it be other-worldly.

There is an anecdote — perhaps apocryphal — about H.P. Blavatsky which contains excellent advice. The date of the incident would be only a few months, or even weeks, before her death on May 8, 1891. Her London residence was a hive of activity: in addition to a stream of visitors, there was invariably a number of helpers around, both those who assisted with the literary work, and other volunteers.

The story has it that on a certain afternoon, one of the younger volunteers knocked on Madame Blavatsky's study door and begged to ask her opinion on a matter that was then being discussed by a group of the helpers.

"Madame", she said, "What is the most important attribute of a student of Theosophy?"

"Common sense, my dear."

"And Madame, what would you consider the next important?"

"A sense of humour."

"And third, Madame?"

At this point, patience must have been wearing thin.

"MORE common sense!"

That's practical enough advice, and also suggests that living the life should be a happy pilgrimage. We have got to apply common sense. After all, Karma is a modifying factor to any of our undertakings, and the rate at which we are going to be able to work off Karma will partly determine how long the journey takes. Fortunately, therefore, within certain limitations we can to some extent decide on the pace we want to travel at, and in general to be sensible in setting our goals. Wise is Blavatsky's advice to the aspirant:

" . . . Let him aspire to no higher than he feels able to accomplish. Let him not take a burden upon himself too heavy for him to carry. Without ever becoming a 'Mahatma', a Buddha or a Great Saint, let him study the philosophy and the 'Science of Soul', and he can become one of the modest benefactors of humanity . . ."

— "Occultism versus the Occult Arts" in *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. IX, p. 254.

Blavatsky's mission was, in part, to express and explain Theosophy, the Divine Wisdom. To this end she went to great lengths to put into a perspective that would be meaningful to 19th and 20th century humanity — at least that part of humanity that was and is ready — to put into a perspective the Great Plan of the Universe, and our place in that scheme of things. A study of Theosophy shows that, while it is helpful to know the plan, we must also know that the onus is placed squarely on each of our shoulders to do our part to fulfill it. For most of us, who are children of a materialistic age, and with ourselves largely to blame for it, the prospect is rather terrifying. It demands a journey which the timid are not going to start, and

on which the weak are going to fall by the wayside. Small wonder that it is a way of life that can hardly be described as popular.

Those who accept the Truth of the Theosophic scheme, however, will know beyond doubt that the indicated path for humanity, which begins to narrow at the entrance to the Theosophic Life, is consistent with that scheme. The end is a long way down the path, and not even the winning of an independent conscious existence for the divine Soul is the ultimate end, but that is where our self-induced and self-devised efforts must be directed.

It is a life that must be lived in our every thought and action, day in, day out, year in, year out. And yes . . . lifetime after lifetime.

It is easy to become a Theosophist, she said.

She also said:

“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 Vidya*) depicts — these are the golden stairs up the steps of which the learner may climb to the Temple of Divine Wisdom.”

T.G.D.

Every true Theosophist is morally bound to sacrifice the personal to the impersonal, his own *present good* to the *future* benefit of other people.

— *The Key to Theosophy*

SECRET DOCTRINE QUESTION AND ANSWER SECTION

(Continued from page 130)

Esoteric Philosophy holds that it requires one Round for the complete unfoldment and development of an Element-Principle (or Tattva). As humanity is progressing in the Fourth Round, the Element-Principle that is being developed in complete unfoldment is that of the “lowest” or densest Tattva, corresponding with the Fourth Round, that of Earth. Likewise each Tattva has a predominating correspondence with each one of the following “sevens”: with the Seven Rounds; with the Seven Root-Races; with the Seven Globes (of the planetary chain); with the Seven Kosmic Principles; with the Seven Human Principles; and with the seven senses of man. But this correspondence applies to the basic Tattva or Originant Element-Principle rather than to the developed product which is familiar on this plane.

Here is the list of the Element-Principles, placed in descending emanational sequence, with English equivalents:

1. Adi-Tattva, Primordial Universal Force.
2. Anupapadaka-Tattva, Spirit.
3. Akasa-Tattva, Aether.
4. Taijasa-Tattva, Fire.
5. Vayu-Tattva, Air.
6. Apas-Tattva, Water.
7. Prithivi-Tattva, Earth.

BOOK REVIEW

Search and Find, Theosophical Reference Index (following the Blavatsky Tradition), compiled by Elsie Benjamin. Published 1978 by Point Loma Publications Inc., P.O. Box 9966, San Diego, California 92109. 155 pp. Price \$3.95.

Mrs. Benjamin started her Theosophical Reference Index in 1929, when she was secretary to Dr. de Purucker at Point Loma, and she has added continuously to it since. The existence of this Index has been

known for years to readers of the Corresponding Fellows Lodge *Bulletin*, which she has edited since 1945; references to it in that journal have prompted many a suggestion that it be shared with other students of Theosophy, and it follows that Point Loma Publications Inc. will accrue much gratitude for their initiative in publishing it.

The masthead of the CFL *Bulletin* carries the banner, "Following the Blavatsky Tradition", and it is not surprising that *Search and Find* is faithful to this practice. The references are mostly from the *Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*; the writings of Blavatsky, Judge and de Purucker; together with a number of other compatible sources.

No index lends itself to a review. Let me then cite a couple of reactions to *Search*

and *Find*. A friend, browsing through my copy, cried, "This is wonderful: if only there was more of it!" Another friend, after receiving his copy, told me that a single intriguing entry had been worth the price of the book to him.

Search and Find is not complete, of course. Such a project goes on and on. Its virtues, apart from the general fascination of its contents, lie in its selective, uncluttered compilation, and that it can be utilized as the foundation of anyone's personal Theosophical Reference Index. The publishers have thoughtfully provided a generous number of blank pages — there is one after each letter of the alphabet — so that a student can just carry on adding references.

Ted G. Davy

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