

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

VOL. 49, No. 8

17th June 1979

ROBERT CROSBIE

[Reprinted from THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, June 1939.—Eds.]

ON the 25th of June, 1919, Robert Crosbie, Founder of the U.L.T., passed away from the mortal world. By his efforts at self-knowledge and by his sacrifices in the service of the Truth he became an Immortal — not immortal perhaps as our civilization conceives immortality, but immortal in the real sense. One aspect of Immortality lies in the token an Immortal leaves behind him for the benefit of his fellow men. When people talk of an immortal they conceive of him as living somewhere in the infinitudes of space. That phase of Immortality may be described as impersonal; a mortal becomes immortal and realizes within himself that he is the Great, the *Brahman*. The impersonal aspect of Immortality is the gift made by a man in the process of uncoiling himself from the iron bonds of mortality.

In the token of his immortality Robert Crosbie reveals the Way he attained; that token consists of his teachings, made available in the volume, *The Friendly Philosopher*. These teachings are neither new nor unique; he passed on what he had heard. All that he said and wrote was taken from H.P.B. and to an even greater extent from W. Q. Judge, whose real worth he understood because of his devotion to the colleague of H.P.B. The mark of Robert Crosbie's writing is — simplicity. His words are so simple that often students miss their profound implications. Through full assimilation of the instructions offered to the world by the Masters of Theosophy, Robert Crosbie achieved the art of simplifying the teachings, and more — of emphasizing those which are really of helpful service to the earnest student of Theosophy.

The life of Robert Crosbie shows what a hard-working student he was; but he did not use his mind merely to collect information. He was

start distinguishing clearer outlines in the lifting and shifting fogs.

This phenomenon certainly occurs within ourselves, but it is particularly frequent when "friends," a double or triple set of selves, discuss Theosophy and try to help one another as much as their limited personal lights might permit. Sometimes, it looks like manna graciously descending. Such delicate moments of communion, this kind of friendship, outer expression of inner fraternity and based on underlying unity, allows help to pass, and we shall often find that questions asked by ourselves are also on the minds of brothers and sisters, or that we anticipate their thoughts and quicken the process of mutual enlightenment by our intense and enthusiastic devotion to the Cause. This community of thought can also work the other way around and provoke surprises, for instance when we discover that, when trying to dissuade others from what we thought to be "their" weaknesses, we were in fact projecting our own weaknesses upon them! The labyrinth of personality surrounds us far and wide, but also on the inside of the very fortress we construct. Thrice lucky those who find Ariadne's thread.

Important questions do not always announce themselves as such. Who is to decide what is important to others? The ways of Manas are manifold and often weird, and just as a pinprick may stir a bulk, an apparently unimportant point may release a flood. In our dealings with one another, in this process of learning, we should be grateful for new viewpoints, unexpected angles. The personal mind, depending on its momentary or more lasting inclinations, either adores the spice of variety or the comfort of similarity. Sincerity is fundamental, and questions asked for the sake of form and decorum, or to lead back to the well-established grooves, although usually well meant, can be devastating to the genuine spirit of enquiry and search present at a meeting. Of course, there are questions so pointed as to be injurious, so difficult as to be entirely impractical, and the fact remains that a fool can ask more questions than seven wise men can answer. And one suspects that the wise might not answer at all. However, for purposes of these dialogues held between serious and active students who really have the Cause at heart, we shall assume that all questions are indeed sincere, and that, in one way or another, they acquired, at the time and in the climate of their being asked, an importance and an urgency which made them logical or mandatory.

In a theosophical gathering, while orderly procedures must be observed, it is rarely wise to launch exclusives against this or that subject

or approach. People's reasons, motives and background are enormously varied, as are their karmic lines of development. No one possesses a monopoly of insight, and students are not only those able to invoke pretended rights of association here and now. They are also the comrades who somehow were engaged with us in distant lands and periods of the past and now show up in the same continuous effort. It is therefore impossible for the questions and the answers always to come from the same side, as if one knew all, dispensing wisdom, and others were merely welcome to sit and listen. Those who remember that they themselves are struggling souls should and will be patient with those, known or unknown, whose inner pressures make them interrupt the smooth and all too easy flow of thoughts and words. The matter before us and the task at hand affect us deeply, so let us value equally the "hotly impetuous" and the reflective, contemplative slow. All qualities are necessary in Nature.

The students whose dialogues we report are not imaginary. It is understood among them that complete frankness is in order, within the limits of propriety, and that those questions and remarks which may sound slightly personal as to form are not such as to intent.

I. — COMMON PRINCIPLES OF INDIVIDUAL DISCIPLINE

FIRST STUDENT: Isn't it one of the striking characteristics of our time that news travels so fast, is beamed instantaneously across and around the whole world, and that masses and masses of information become available through the newspapers, the magazines, books, reports on congresses, digests, reviews, comments, the electronic media, etc.? A veritable daily "Turba"!

SECOND STUDENT: Why, yes. I can't remember when there ever was a similar situation. One wonders how it can go on and on. Scientists and engineers, physicians and lawyers, they all have a hard time trying to keep abreast of information on new developments. The various fields of knowledge seem to be expanding at such a rate that it is fast becoming impossible for anyone to know what is going on in his own area of endeavour, much less in the world as a whole. Hence the growth of information-agencies, of computerized and microfilmed data-storage and the somewhat incongruous demand for people willing to specialize in generalities! But what brought this to mind?

FIRST STUDENT: Well, I heard that the new constitution of the People's Republic of China provides for freedom of the press, but that there isn't a single newspaper which does not print and interpret the news ac-

according to government policy. It is said that the Soviet Union is in the same condition, and probably there are quite a few similar cases.

SECOND STUDENT: Quite! But what about the "writing on the walls" in the Chinese cities?

FIRST STUDENT: That may be inspired by the people in power, too. But anyway, this situation raised a disconcerting thought: it suddenly dawned upon me that in our own ranks, I mean within the U.L.T. aspect of the Theosophical Movement, there does not seem to be any opposition at all! Or if there is, it is not heard or seen. Does everybody always agree on everything? Or are disagreements quickly resolved, stilled, or quenched before they get a chance to submerge?

SECOND STUDENT: You ought to know better than that! If people really know what this movement is about, there should not be any disagreements, and certainly not any lasting ones. What sort of "opposition" did you have in mind? Are you "looking for trouble"?

FIRST STUDENT: Oh! Let me reassure you! I am not "looking for trouble," but I am not going to shut my eyes and pretend there isn't any if I can see it. And as for "opposition," I confess I don't really know. However, I can imagine situations where, say, some of the associates might not agree with a given programme of activities, or a particular selection of subjects, or even a version of the teachings as expressed from the platform or in one of the magazines. Admittedly, Theosophy as a spiritual science cannot be a subject of "argument," but as the works of Plato show, it can be an object of discussion. And as we are, most of us, just students, few of us, if any at all, can be considered as authoritative. To that extent, it seems to me that when opposition is nothing else than the expression of a sincere interest in the Cause, there ought to be some arrangement allowing people to voice their questions and opinions. Would our magazines accept to print opposing views? I mean, to put it in rather extreme terms, are we, in a way, and a very different way of course, analogous to the condition of the Chinese press?

SECOND STUDENT: My! I confess to being rather taken aback by your daring comparison between U.L.T. and the situation of the Chinese press! You do, of course, realize that it sounds quite incongruous. But then, there are so many incongruous situations in this kaleidoscopic life of ours. Fortunately, we have guiding principles of lasting value. Remember that, in U.L.T., we have an association of free individuals who have agreed, entirely voluntarily, to the terms of the Declaration of

Principles. For all intents and purposes, *that* is our "Constitution," but we don't call it that, because a constitution implies fairly fixed and static terms, definitions and conditions, whereas our "Principles," equally firm and fixed, allow for practically infinite extension and variety of application. As far as I know, they can be used as efficient guidelines in any situation which comes up. Truly marvellous, really, a constitution which can remain identical to itself, which never needs to be amended or modified, and yet proves to be sufficient for an infinite number of new applications. In fact, it seems to me that those who drew it up must have been geniuses, or perhaps inspired by Genius, and...

FIRST STUDENT: Please, stop now, for otherwise you will be giving another one of those lectures, the introduction of which goes on until question-time suddenly arrives! You were already becoming dreamy and inspired, right there!

SECOND STUDENT: Thank you for bringing me back to the objective world! But really, we aren't quite finished. In fact, we may have just scratched the surface. There is a very interesting implication in your question, namely, the capacity of human beings to agree, in full freedom, to a system... yes, why not, to a system of discipline in order to further a common Cause. Your question really revolves around what constitutes a sufficient and practical basis of unity among Theosophists, doesn't it?

FIRST STUDENT: So you are going to answer a question about the Declaration by means of the Declaration?!

SECOND STUDENT: Certainly! If you can go so far as to establish a comparison between U.L.T. and an aspect of the Chinese People's Republic, I should definitely like to answer you by invoking our Declaration, if you will allow me to proceed...

FIRST STUDENT: Indeed, by all means.

SECOND STUDENT: Well, if we have agreed to a policy upon becoming associates, it would seem logical to refer disagreements to the terms of that policy, not like lawyers, but like students seeking to find out what these terms mean in a given context. Now, if you ask whether U.L.T. allows "opposition," I would definitely answer "yes," although U.L.T. "does not concern itself with dissensions or differences of individual opinion." That does not mean at all that U.L.T. would insist on some kind of conformity. Besides, one doesn't see how it could! Members are fully entitled to their individual opinions and are indeed most strongly invited to have them. That is their own responsibility. The subject-matter of Theosophy is so vast, and the formulation even of its funda-

mental principles so varied, that we could hardly expect "agreement" upon everything, and naturally less so among thinking and studying members than among meek followers. Such superficial agreement is not at all what we are seeking. We are looking for students, not followers, although people who are satisfied "just to follow" are perfectly welcome: they too will become students sooner or later. By the same token, the work of the Lodge is so important that it has no "time or inclination to take part in side issues." The purpose of our work is to contribute in the best possible way to the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number, and that in the highest possible sense. If we begin to understand *that*, "personal agreements or disagreements" will seem kind of petty.

FIRST STUDENT: Yes, quite, I see that, but saving pounds does not absolve us from taking care of pennies! People's personal understandings are important to them, and after all, we have to work with people as they are. They have to take us as *we* are, haven't they? They may vaguely feel the promptings of intuition, or the voice of ideals may speak loudly in them, still, they remain vulnerable in many ways. In order to feel at home, they must have their say at least some times, and quite justifiably so. Don't you remember those cases when you and I were so engaged in lofty metaphysics that we had to be awakened, a bit rudely perhaps, by simple questions which required us to explain our glib terminology?

SECOND STUDENT: Oh yes, indeed! We were discussing the Spiritual Ego and this man asked "What is the Ego?" You replied by giving the "Atma-Buddhi-Manas" definition and when you realized that he understood even less, you looked for a moment as if you were going to "explain" the Triad by calling it the Ego! Various people in the room looked relieved and started smiling when you took up the subject from the viewpoint of daily experience. "Simple" questions do force us to get back to ideas and find new words or a different usage of old words, don't they? This mechanical way of quoting phraseology is not recommended. . .

FIRST STUDENT: Well, then, let's get back to people, their worries, foibles, temporary enthusiasms and misunderstandings, their temperaments, their. . .

SECOND STUDENT: Yes, their pranks, their glories, the tricks they play upon themselves! I suppose there must be those permanently anxious ones whose wonderings, differences of opinion, restlessness, are not even articulate, but fume and smoulder: they have a difficult time formulating

their thoughts clearly to themselves. Some can be diplomatic, and avoid eruptions, but impersonality is not a form of diplomacy to hide ambitions of any kind. Listening attentively and with genuine sympathy to people talking about their problems need not be boring; we can often learn a lot by remembering that our fellows are ourselves and hold up a mirror. The attempt to practise theosophical ethics gives us an immediate, captive and inexhaustible target, namely, ourselves. What can we ever achieve without a minimum of calmness and "patience sweet"? Isn't it decidedly strange that though we have the solemn learning about Kali Yuga's 432,000 years, we become irritated with the little things within and around us? We are easily patient with our own weaknesses and expect kind forbearance from others. We are genuinely surprised, eyebrows raised, when others disagree, do not supply the pat on the shoulder we so innocently expect. Let's face it: we are after self-knowledge and must try to "hit the mark." Worrying about ourselves, our status, position or degree is not going to help. "Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions and by humility..." *Gita* IV puts *service* first. Probably, we can learn more about ourselves by forgetting ourselves than by ephemeral efforts at self-study which become cherished moments of self-pity and auto-commiseration...

FIRST STUDENT: Splendid speech! I'm glad I gave you an opportunity to blow off steam! You were getting ready for lyrics again, and all this is more easily said than done, although we know it's possible, fortunately. However, you may have slightly overshot the mark yourself, for I wasn't thinking so much about the worries people may feel concerning themselves, but rather about their real concern for the well-being of the Work. Yes, I admit I did not state that very clearly when I asked you to get back to people. You see, people feel linked up with or bound to the success of the Cause they believe in. That concern may be mainly subjective, but it appears as real to them, and when that is questioned, they will invoke all the clauses of the Declaration to defend their "awareness," if only in their own eyes. And please, do remember that there are objective situations which engender doubt. For instance, the refusal to accept discussion of the issues concerned, or the attempts to "snow them under" with appeals to discipline, impersonality, trust, devotion and the like, are only two of them. I remember a case, long ago, where the Three Fundamental Propositions were taken at all meetings, by the same people and generally in the same manner. This went on for years and years. When a newcomer arrived and asked why the First of Six Items from the *S.D.*

or the Ten Points from *Isis Unveiled* were never studied, she was told that the Lodge was faithfully following "the lines laid down" by an older student, who had long since left the earthly scene. When it was pointed out that the "older student," if he were available, would certainly reintroduce the two texts concerned, for such and such excellent reasons, and another year of soul-searching had passed, the new proposal was finally adopted. . .

SECOND STUDENT: You have an amazing capacity for remembering old stories and re-extracting ancient thorns. . .

FIRST STUDENT: And you for floating high above practical considerations! As we are always repeating that Theosophy must be *practised*, don't you think we should stop running away from the practical issues? Or are you trying to avoid being caught in "thorny" questions?

SECOND STUDENT: Oh no! At least, I don't think so, but we have so many more important things to do! *You* haven't finished your article about the purposes of evolution on the Moon, I haven't done the accounts, our reserves of books have to be counted again, and there is this Sunday-lecture on the Psychic and Spiritual Powers. . .

FIRST STUDENT: Exactly! Perhaps the Three Fundamentals were really more important than the First of six Items or the Ten Points, but what could possibly be wrong with taking them up as well, and especially, why refuse a constructive suggestion made by a sincere Theosophist in good standing?

SECOND STUDENT: Look, is all this going to help you to "lead the higher life"? Aren't you being merely dialectical and displaying the line of reasoning of your argumentative mind?

FIRST STUDENT: Well, I admit I wanted to "have this out." And as for being dialectical or argumentative, do you remember Socrates?

SECOND STUDENT: You're not Socrates!

FIRST STUDENT: How do you know?

SECOND STUDENT: How do you know I don't?

These last remarks are made laughingly, need we say? The Students get up and have a cup of tea while listening to the seven o'clock news. This brings details of ferment in the East: many killed, many more directly or indirectly affected.

Our laughing friends have become serious again. There is an exchange of pensive, somewhat guilty, looks. Tea is sipped in silence, eyes downcast. . .

SOME ASPECTS OF KARMA

IF there is any one theme in the teachings of Theosophy which we cannot recur to too often or study too closely, most students are almost certain to agree that it is the doctrine of Karma.

Is not our Karma our life? What we *are* is due to its action in time past. Our circumstances in time present are of its making. And Karma will bring us the fruits of that present in time to come.

Such are the basic Karmic facts, applicable no less to races than to individuals, and over and over does Theosophy remind us that *chance* plays no part in them at all. We have “to rise from considering the mere outside delusive environment, knowing it to be the result of past lives, the fruition of Karma done.” For “each man’s life and character are the outcome of his previous lives and thoughts. . . . Nothing is left to chance, favour, or partiality, but all is under the governance of law . . . the law of Karma or justice, sometimes called the ethical law of causation.”

Such are the words of W. Q. Judge, to be found in *U.L.T. Pamphlet Nos. 21 and 5*, on pages 4 and 5 respectively, and Mr. Judge is an infallible guide for all of us, whatever our stage of study—or of life. They convey the full meaning of Karma briefly and accurately, indeed would be almost sufficient in themselves to ensure our right progress from birth to birth. But, continually, in his letters, books, and articles, Mr. Judge, in dealing with this vital subject, brings up some point which in all probability we would never have thought of, even as matter for a question, though we realize, as he expounds it, how essentially meaningful it is.

Delayed Karma—have we thought of that? Can there be Karma beyond that which we are experiencing? Yes, says Mr. Judge, there is a class of Karma “which is held over and not now in operation because the man does not furnish the appropriate means for bringing it into action.” With an apt simile he makes this plain to us. Such Karma “may be likened to vapour held in suspension in the atmosphere and not visible to the eye, but which will fall as rain upon the earth the moment conditions are ripe.” (*Echoes from the Orient*, p. 41)

In his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* he enlarges upon this, more profoundly. (It is there that the term “delayed Karma” occurs.) Since “in any one life the ordinary man only takes up and exhausts what Karma his bodily apparatus permits,” a quantity will remain over at the time of death, and only “his next body may furnish the needed apparatus to

bring up to the front this mass of unexpended Karma," whose quality, as distinct from quantity, is unknown and may be either good or bad.

This is a fact we must face, though we may shrink from it. We cannot simply ignore it. To acknowledge Karma as justice entails our acceptance of it and we may be helped towards this by some further words from Mr. Judge. "THE LAW is Karma, reincarnation is only an incident. It is one of the means which The Law uses to bring us at last to the true light." (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 21*, p. 3)

A second point calls for thought in this connection. In addition to "what we may roughly, for the present, call delayed Karma," Mr. Judge refers also to "unspent affinities" (*Gita Notes*, pp. 65-66). Each, actually, involves the other. For much of our Karma, he tells us, can only be activated through those who incarnate along with us, *as they have done before*. In the past, however, our ways may have diverged, one earnestly living the life of devotion, the other careless of serious issues, thereby laying up more "bad" Karma, but now, through the "unexpended affinity" awaiting us in the later incarnation, being given the chance to wake up and search for truth. "By its aid nature works salvation," says Mr. Judge.

What are we considering in this short article?

Those features of Karma which are rather less obvious than certain others.

One of them is brought before us in a mere six words. "We have to exhaust all Karma." you will find it on page 119 of *Letters That Have Helped Me* and will note Mr. Judge's explanation of how this is to be done. Not by any occult or mystical process. "We have to exhaust all Karma, which means duty," he says simply.

The definition is a right one, and Mr. Judge enlarges upon it when referring in another context to the ever-perplexing fact that "one man has opportunity and happiness, another meets only the opposite. Why is this? It is because each state is the exact result bound to come from his having disturbed or preserved the harmony of nature." Each state, accordingly, is that man's Karma, but "every man," continues Mr. Judge, "is endowed with conscience and the power to use his life, whatever its form or circumstance, in the proper way, so as to extract from it all the good for himself and his fellows that his limitations of character will permit. It is his duty so to do, and as he neglects or obeys, so will be his subsequent *punishment* or *reward*." (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 30*, pp. 2 and 3)

So duty performed or neglected spells out our Karma! Is not that

obvious when we pause to think of it? Then Mr. Judge, great occultist as he is, need tell us nothing more to enable us to tread the Path steadfastly. Yet we fail to, all too often, perhaps because we are hankering after some more mysterious method. Let us at least take Mr. Judge's word for it. None the less, if we persevere, Karma "produces from life to life a *tendency* for good, virtuous, wise actions and thoughts." (U.L.T. *Pamphlet No. 30*, p. 4)

To accomplish this we need stamina, and in one of Mr. Judge's letters to his disciple Jasper Niemand, we find the term "Karmic stamina," a quality we may not have associated with Karma previously. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 17)

Think what stamina is — not precisely strength as apparent in action, but a healthy inward stock of it to be drawn upon as need arises. Fortunate are those who have Karmic stamina, acquired in past births through devotion to the Higher Self. Sattvic qualities have become engrained in them, so as to continue in greater degree in succeeding incarnations. Their lot outwardly may not be an easy one, but with Karmic stamina that Higher Self will hold its own. For our outer environment, says Mr. Judge, "is only an incident. . . . The real environment to be understood and cared about is that in which Karma itself inheres in us." (U.L.T. *Pamphlet No. 21*, p. 3)

The theme of Karma and Rebirth runs through all Mr. Judge's writings like the *motif* in a great symphony, and if we care for our inner self we do well to listen to it. Yet these two little pamphlets on Karma, Numbers 21 and 30, slim as they are, comprising only twelve pages between them, offer the gist of his teaching on the subject, invaluable matter for any student to ponder over. They could (without exaggeration) influence all our lives to come.

A final word from him, this time from *Vernal Blooms*, the memorial volume published on the fiftieth anniversary of his death, which death, we know, was but a milestone to be passed, as he would have it be for all of us. "Karmic tendency is an unswerving law. It compels us to go on in this movement of thought and doctrine; it will bring back to reincarnation all in it now."

Welcome be the assurance of such compulsion! May it save us from wanderings and wastage of precious time! May we find greater opportunities of caring for and aiding our fellow-creatures! May we be better student-servers of Theosophy!

THINKING VERSUS READING

[Reprinted from *The Path*, June 1888.—EDS.]

THE opinion of theosophical students is divided in respect to reading. There are those who consider that the chief source of learning is study, while others deprecate much reading and urge us to confine our efforts to “living the life.” The truth of course is that both methods are to be combined. They serve different departments of the same end. By study — especially of scriptures — we are enabled to form more just ideas of what “the life” may be, and in what way we shall live it. By living it, we correct all mistaken ideas; we shave and prune the excrescences of the mind. The application of spiritual (impersonal) ideas in daily life; the study of how we may hold to them amid the practical routine; the endeavour to discover them within all material conditions and things; the effort to develop them — all these broaden the nature and enable us, through the spiritual will, to alchemize it into spiritual essences and powers. Nothing is wholly material; if it were, it could not exist, it could not cohere for an instant. That mysterious force which is within all things and enables them to “live,” or to advance through successive changes, is what we call Spirit. In *Bhagavad-Gita* we find that Purush and Prakriti, or Spirit (energy) and Nature, are forever conjoined. All the powers existing in the macrocosm having also their various specific seats in man, it follows plainly that, if we wish to evolve more rapidly by means of these powers, as the universe also evolves by them, we must think and think within ourselves. These forces are under the guidance of will, thought, and knowledge;¹ reading will never enable us to reach them; thinking may put us on their track.

To examine this question of reading. What is it that we do when we read? It is not reading to repeat, parrot-like, words which we instantly forget, like the infant class over its primer. The eye encounters certain words and an idea is conveyed to the brain. Is this all? For certain persons it is all. They accept this idea as a form, a crystallization representing a certain state of things. If it attracts them, they retain and quote it; otherwise they dismiss it. In either case it is to them a finality. Such persons have their brains stored with such formulas; they have never lived them out, even in the mind; they do not really know the idea represented by this form of words at all. The fancy or the prejudice has been tickled by mere sound. All this is so much useless lumber. Show

¹ *Itchasakti, Kriyasakti, Gnanasakti.* See *Five Years of Theosophy*, page 110.

them what some of their favourite ideas really involve if carried out, and they cast them aside in disgust or dismay. This is the sort of reading which is much to be deprecated, along with that other kind undertaken to "pass time." That an idea is a seed which, once planted, should sprout and grow, they do not see. That all ideas have a specific, energetic life of their own, and that this life is directly proportionate to the vitality (or truth) of the idea, they do not see. That thoughts have a power of self-reproduction, bearing a thousandfold for use or misuse, that they have an insidious and tremendous power, none but occultists know. That a part of the vital energy and real being of a writer is diffused throughout every page even of his printed works and more or less affects the reader as a psychomagnetic entity, is rarely thought of at all. Every thought modifies the mind; it energizes according to the nature of those thoughts, diffusing a pernicious, weak, or beneficent force about us. If they are too rapidly forced upon it, the mind becomes gorged; we have mental dyspepsia and an unhealthy condition, not only in the internal organ called mind, but also in the physical organs which quickly respond to its condition. A habit of the mind is soon formed, and, like the dyspeptic, it craves abnormal quantities of food, alternated with periods of sluggish inertia: moreover, it becomes habituated to certain kinds of stimulus; if we feed it long upon novels or excitement, it will reject more healthy food.

A greater reason for careful choice of reading than all these is found in the fact that something within us, that thing which knows and strives to make us know, takes advantage of the vibration set up in the mental (and through that to the outer) man to transfuse his understanding with more light. This something, this soul, leaps up within us, touched by the current flowing from those thoughts, and asserts of them, "They are true!" or, "They are false!" Thus books may help us to remember, to recall what we have lost. And no man to whom life is sacred will wish to expend those energies of which life consists in any idle fashion, or to develop their lower forms when the higher are equally at his command.

How then shall we read? When we have reason to believe that the writer knows somewhat of his subject, we may assume a receptive attitude. Where such is not the case we cannot usefully read at all. We may not judge our author. He may have found truths unsuited to us now, or teach them in ways which we are unfitted to pursue; this being so, we shall do well to avoid what is at present unhealthy nourishment. Where we feel attracted and do read, we should receive the idea into

our minds and, submitting ourselves passively to its influence, note what impression is stamped upon the sensitized plate within. The true character of the idea is *felt* rather than intellectually cognized, and by such a study of the interior impression we receive the verdict of the hidden judge. We need dread no *Vehmgericht* but this; by it all stands or falls.² To attain this end we must hold ourselves still. The outer self must maintain an attitude of suspended judgment, or up comes our mere personality with quips, cranks, whims, opinions, and loves, drowning the inner voice with its racket and hubbub.

Another way of utilizing ideas is to assume their merit and to study wherein that merit may possibly consist, what fine ray has escaped our grosser sight. For example: I quoted to a comrade this line: "We must be ready to say at any moment, under whatever circumstances, whether expected or unexpected: 'It is just what I in fact desired'."³ My comrade replied that this appeared to him hypocritical. If he lost an arm, for instance, he could cheerfully submit, but he could not in truth say that he desired precisely that accident. This objection has a surface correctness. Had he read with an assumption that the line must have some truth in it, and had he examined it in that belief, he would doubtless have found its true bearing, while such personal exertion opens up a mind and nourishes it as no artificial injection can do. That true bearing is that the reincarnating soul has chosen those circumstances most needed for its evolution; to work out that evolution we must work through our Karma; there is no other way. Hence my Higher Self, my real self, did in fact desire just that body and all its Karmic circumstances and life as a necessary experience for my soul at this juncture, the soul having to pass through all experiences, and though *i* may not desire them, *I* do. No true statements can be based upon the assumption that the personality, or even the lower principles of the soul, is the real ego at all.

There is again another point to be guarded against in reading books other than sacred writings, whose inner meaning we strive to assimilate. It is the reverse of the one above stated, and cautions us against too great mental hospitality. It is the danger of basing our faith upon the personality of the writer. If we do this, were he the Jove of Theosophy himself, we may receive injury rather than benefit. We may have good reason to believe him possessed of more or less of knowledge. Whether he has himself assimilated that knowledge is again another question. An

² *Vehmgericht*. A secret tribunal of old.

³ See *Path* for February 1888, page 328 [*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 45].

initiate will have done so, and the real value of his writings for us will consist in the fact of his being himself those truths which he gives out: he is himself the word and the sign of his degree. Only in so far as he has lived out his knowledge and *become* it, can he impart it beneficially to its readers in turn. Otherwise he runs the risk of presenting partial Truths through the medium of his own personality and tinging them thereby. In this way, with the best will in the world perhaps, he gives to students himself and not the Truth, gives his warped edition of it. As an occult fact, we can only give ourselves and no more; hence to give Truth we must be It. Herein lies the value of the writings of initiates, ending with those of our beloved Madame Blavatsky, who alone has dared to speak plainly to her era. The movement she inaugurated and the well-spring of teachings she opened for us to draw upon have been the means of renown for many writers who, without her initial courage, had never won an audience or a name. Even as one of the very least of these, I say: "May we never forget the debt."

Were all readers forewarned and ready to discount the personality, this danger would be lessened. Such discrimination in these matters is a spiritual quality not as yet generally found among men; it is a power of the soul, a more or less direct perception of Truth. It behooves the writer desirous of serving mankind to look well to his words, to the form in which he imprisons so much of the Truth as he has found, and to strive earnestly only to give forth so much of it as he himself embodies in life, so much as he has become. Great harm is constantly done by the spread of brain- and lip-knowledge, to be proven false supports by suffering men. And we do better to take the tone of suggestion rather than that of authority. We may have touched upon our higher powers without having fully raised the nature to them. While we are but men we only see by glimpses; then the veil falls again. So I would preface all writings with the request that the reader be guided by his own natural selection to a very great extent.

Many writers, too, have come into this life with a special task to perform. They have something to say or to give, and when it is done, their usefulness to humanity is over; they seem then to have outlived themselves; long before their bodies pass into the ranks of the unseen, their virility and life-giving power have departed. We often see this fatal high-water mark in the life of the poet, the painter, the leader we followed and loved; see that he can never surpass it, that he has touched his highest state for this incarnation. To remain there is impossible. A

law of nature decrees that he must advance or recede; in nature there is no standing still. We ask ourselves who has set this fatal limit, and we see clearly that the man alone has done himself this wrong. It is Karma, but a Karma of his own making. Some there are who pass, indeed, beyond that limit to intellectual greatness, but in doing so they have passed beyond our ordinary sight and have joined the silent workers in the Lodge of Truth. The only indication left us of their progress is the fact that they have never fallen to a lower level than that great one where we saw them standing. They have never followed up their words of power by the impotent babble of senility. Few indeed are these men, for "many are called, but few are chosen." They are those who have a Karmic stock of spiritual energy sufficient to flood them over the crisis, and they use their highest intellectuality as a stepping-stone to that which lies beyond intellect and above thought. The lesser men suffer. They have done so much, sacrificed so much, they do not understand why their words are no longer snatched from their lips and passed eagerly along the expectant throng. It is because those words are vain repetitions; they are no longer living, winged things. The speaker has not renewed his thought; he has fallen to worshipping his own methods; he makes an apotheosis of his present knowledge instead of reaching up to the realms of real life for new, vital essences. Thought, however broad, follows a circle at last, and in it he runs like a squirrel turning a wheel with puerile activity.

The mere fact that a man thinks he has done something or sacrificed something should show him his mistake. Deeds have been done through him, not by him. His so-called sacrifice was his opportunity to rise to real greatness, and only his half methods have limited it to a sacrifice. Some cry out in despair that it had been better to do nothing at all. I would not say that. The irresistible waves surge onward and bear us to a certain point: we may lie there long; still this is so much progress which we can never lose. The pity is that we should not arise ourselves and go further without waiting for the next tide.

These considerations show us that disagreements between theosophical writers are often unavoidable, the writers being but men and women. It is to our advantage to use our discriminative powers, to strengthen them by use. So we are not injured by these differences. We are more injured if we stake our faith upon any one or several writers, just because when our idols crumble — and crumble they must, we are so often found in the dust beneath them, found stunned and wounded by their fall. "Let a man learn to bear the disappearance of the things he was

wont to reverence without losing his reverence." A truer word than that Emerson never wrote. We are instruments in mighty hands: if we turn our edge, we must expect to be laid aside. We must then refrain from solidifying our thoughts into a system, our reports of Truth into dogmas. We may not be dazzled even by the highest heavens, but must worship Truth alone.

Thus the whole problem for both writer and reader consists in eschewing mere forms, in looking beyond words to the principles which they represent faintly. A man represents one or more universals; his thought should do the same. He will never mislead while he only gives us these; we shall never misunderstand him while we look for nothing less. All reading is useless, so far as spiritual progress is concerned, which cannot be conducted upon the above lines. If they limit your reading, they will extend your thinking. So much the better, for thinking is the path toward becoming. "What a man thinks, that he is; this is the old secret," say the Upanishads. There is a way of taking a thought and brooding over it as a bird broods on the nest; by this method the true thought hatches out and itself manifests to us. We must apply these thoughts to the touchstone of our own souls. Reading and thinking are not to be divorced. They should be one act; then each would correct and equilibrate the other.

My last word upon this subject would be this, and I would say it emphatically. Never receive and pass onward a thought which you do not feel and understand. On this point accept no authority other than your own soul. It is better that you seem to lose a ray of Truth than to accept and deflect it by a want of understanding, a want of assimilation of it. If it be yours in the Law, you cannot lose it. It will be sent to you again and again until you do receive it. Take then what your nature selects until you reach a point where you can rise above nature. When this is reached you will not need to read any longer, except from the wonderful book of life and from those blessed Scriptures wherein the Divine has spoken to the ages through men who had attained to some share in His being.

—JASPER NIEMAND, F.T.S.

ONE moment of patience may ward off great disaster. One moment of impatience may ruin a whole life.

—CHINESE PROVERB

CAN A "HIGHER LIFE" BE LIVED?

Life is a contest of smiles if we really know our business.

We have a duty to see that we do all we can *in our own place* as we see best, undisturbed and undismayed by aught.

Getting back the memory of other lives is really the whole of the process.

No greater charity can be bestowed upon suffering humanity than right knowledge that leads to right action.

—W. Q. JUDGE

MAN has been called "a pilgrim out of the past and a voyager into the future." Each one, consciously or unconsciously, has his own conception of a "higher" or "better" life.

In this ideal of a better life is implied: (1) a visualization of improvement over past or present circumstances; (2) a hope that this will be pleasant and enjoyable; and (3) plans to bring this about.

There are many ideas held as to what a higher or better life may be. Some want it only for themselves, and some want their fellow men to share in their ideal.

To set out seriously to live a higher life, the individual will need to set himself a programme. He will have to take stock of: (1) his present situation (including his assets and his limitations) in an accurate, realistic way; (2) his environment (vocation, circumstances, family, friends and associates); and (3) his motives—but in these he will find less precision in definition, since he has not, generally, been adequately trained to identify, analyse or understand and use them; in fact, many of us believe we can be motivated by outside influences, not realizing that it is our own attitude of receptivity or activity that makes the difference. In dealing with motives, we are dealing with our emotional nature. The fact to realize is that *we* are not our emotions, but that we are *observing* them. *We* have the capability of detaching ourselves and directing them. If this is seen, then we are led to ask: "Who are *we*?" Theosophy, repeating the ancient wisdom, answers: "Thou art **THAT**"; meaning that we and the Universal SPIRIT are of the same essence. The indweller in each of us is an immortal.

The inquirer soon finds that living the higher life is a serious affair; and, if pursued sincerely and with determination, definite results ensue.

Theosophy, which is but a name given to an age-old body of wis-

dom, is a record of the laws and facts about the Universe, about Nature and Man, both visible and invisible. It is *scientific*, in the sense that it looks into and records all facts and truths. It is *religious*, in the literal sense of that word, *i.e.*, it binds all beings together, without coercion, and by understanding which arises spontaneously from within. And it is *philosophical* (philosophy meaning "the love of wisdom as leading to the search for it"), because it asks that we reason out for ourselves these propositions so as to assure ourselves, without outside authorities, of their validity. It therefore recommends that we analyse a problem in relation to ourselves and the beings in our environment who will interact; and it seeks to find out: "Who will benefit?" "Is a proposed action related to general trends in Nature?" "Can the basic laws and processes that apply to a given situation be found out?"

This approach is ancient and each one needs to use it for himself, since no one can do it for someone else. At best, we can "open windows" for one another and ask our fellows to look at the vistas we see, to find out if we, also, are seeing correctly. The Theosophical approach starts with a view of each man as *mind*, living in and using a body. Mind is the power of cognition or thought as well as an individual entity derived from the Universal Mind Principle (*Mahat*). The great Laws and Plans of the Kosmos should be evidence of the exact, immutable and impersonal interrelation of all parts, all beings, to one another and to the WHOLE. Theosophy declares as fundamentals that: (1) LAW rules everywhere; (2) the Universe is a UNITY and all men are brothers, since their spirit-souls emanate from the same Source — the ever unchangeable, immutable *Parabrahm*, the "Rootless Root" of all; and (3) all beings evolve together in a conjoint and generally harmonious manner. Nothing is too insignificant or unimportant. The atom in its place performs as vital a function in the Universe as does a Sun, with its planets, in the galaxy. All beings, men, atoms, elementals and universes are intertwined and interblended in a single Whole. Karma is a Sanskrit word used to indicate a concept — the concept that there is interrelation between all beings, and, further, that every being carries with it the record of its past experiences and reflects its future goals and ideals. *Reincarnation* is the term used to indicate the process whereby the individual (*mind-manasa*) — each of us — undergoes experience within the sweep of general evolutionary processes.

These three fundamental ideas include, essentially: (1) individual consciousness, present everywhere, in *all* beings; (2) universal pur-

positiveness and law; and (3) a universal evolutionary trend, which may be described as the development of universal awareness in the individual. This last would include such states and conditions of mind as consciousness, awareness, sensitivity, perception, feeling, memory and anticipation. These are recorded in that "monad," or single unit of life — an individual Perceiver — which is undergoing the evolutionary process.

Speaking broadly, these units of consciousness (monads) exist in the Universe in three main categories: (1) not-yet-men, or the lower kingdoms of Nature; (2) *manasas*, or mind-beings, such as we are; and (3) *Mahatmas*, Great Souls, or those whose consciousness was once like ours but which, through self training and broadening to the Universal, embraces the Whole. Their mission is primarily educative; it is the preservation and dissemination of the accumulated Wisdom of the Ages. To us, they are an inspiration, a living Ideal to which we and all beings may aspire. They are at the top of the ladder of evolution, a goal which we too may reach. The fact that men can achieve greatness implies that our own efforts are not purposeless, even though our present brains do not consciously remember our past lives as embodied Egos, or spiritual "pilgrims." In our innermost consciousness we are said to carry all our experiences. In fact, our own character, capacities, talents, or their lack, should indicate to us what we have already achieved; and, with the opportunities around us, ought to inspire us to widen out into new fields of knowledge and endeavour.

We may now see how our desire to live a higher life starts by making our will operate on our mind, organizing it to search and to work. We first recall all the knowledge that we have on the subject. Perhaps this is found inadequate or vague, so we undertake to study, to learn more, so that we may have greater accuracy in our estimates and conclusions and may establish a sounder base for our progress. We find that the study process requires discipline and imposes limitations on our time and our activities. We may begin to classify items of knowledge into correlates, which further serve to prove basic laws sensed in our universe and in ourselves, and point to the fact that there are areas where the visible effects are moved by causes that are invisible, so far, to us. We find ourselves driven to look for the causal side of things. The learning process, then, begins to affect our ways of life, the use of our time, and sharpens our awareness of the sequence of events in the passage of time that we call our lives. New dimensions of breadth and depth are sensed, and the anticipation of results from our present decisions.

actions and words makes us rather more cautious of our activities; we begin consciously to look for the effect our actions have on our environment and anticipate what it will then reflect back on to us in terms of Karma and Reincarnation. A reasonable conclusion, taking this view into account, is that to the extent we harmonize with Nature's laws and ways, so may be the more swift and purposeful evolution that we pursue as individuals, and so, too, may be the improvement that we bring in terms of training to the instruments (our bodies, our "possessions") that we use and are responsible for.

In Indian philosophy the word *dharma* is used to designate this view of the unit-man working as a field of influence within the greater field of Nature; of the individual's responsibility for the evolutionary progress of all the "lives" which make up his body and his "possessions." We are temporarily responsible for these possessions; to the extent that we think we "own" them, we become bound by them. They are not a permanent part of us but are lent to us for a while by Nature, and ours the responsibility to make the best use of them and to assist them in their onward evolution, so that when they in turn achieve self-consciousness, our work with them may have saved them pain, suffering and delay.

This view of evolutionary co-operation is one which leads us to see that the worst attitude to adopt is that of carelessness for other beings — high, equal, or low. It in no way suggests that we surrender our individual consciousness, but, by sharpening and developing its acuity, we are enabled to lead more useful lives. We see more and more that we share responsibility with others in Nature's programme and have a proper place to fill, duties to perform, and that true happiness lies in performing all duties that are naturally ours.

Taking into account the idea of reincarnation as a basis for our relations with our fellows, we may see that the real Inner Man, the Spirit-Soul, the *Monad*, being immortal, the present conditions of life (race, family, life-style, status, caste, etc.) are transitory. What we do with them makes our future, in this life and in succeeding incarnations. Those who are our family and friends in this life may have been associated with us in the past, and may in future lives again renew the old ties. Under Karma, human beings are either brought together to participate in their common endeavour, or drawn into pastures new. It is but natural that affinities serve to reunite those who are sympathetic, and emphasis on divergences widens the gap between individuals. Thomas Paine's profession of faith can be that of any well-intentioned individ-

ual: "My country is the world and my religion is to do good." And, we can add to this: "All men are brothers."

These considerations leave out the whole field of ritual ethics, or the science of morals as seen and adopted by the various sects and religions. It may be seen by historical review that all these emerged at one time or another from one central trunk — the universal and primitive Wisdom-Religion, named in our times Theosophy (godlike wisdom). A hierarchy of "authorities" has never served to awaken in the many votaries of the world's creeds that truly human right — the right to think and know for oneself, or, self-education. Theosophical philosophy makes each man stand firmly on his own feet, and places moral responsibility in his hands. It makes of him a priest, but only unto himself. Since all have in them the same spiritual essence, the closest place to God and Truth is in our own hearts.

It is for this reason that we are asked to "forgive, forgive, and largely forget" any hurt received from others. The element of charity to others has to develop because of our understanding of their limitations — limitations that they are in the process of learning to overcome. The concept of brotherhood is based on the idea of the Universal family of Nature of which we are all parts.

In a way, everyone is in the process of living the kind of "higher life" that his present stage of consciousness permits him to do. It is the limits that one imposes on oneself that make the difference. Nature in her impartiality, working under the laws of general evolution, reflects back on us that hurt or sorrow of which we have been the generating cause at some time, perhaps aeons back.

Our community is the world; and our mission being educative, we should treat all as fellow learners, as brother souls. Those of less developed consciousness, monads embodied in the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms, we may look upon as men-to-be — those whose evolution we are now helping or hindering by our treatment of them. Can we, then, still look with equanimity on the pain that is inflicted on animals by our reckless and irresponsible attitude towards them? Can we look on the abuses of modern technology in the areas of industry, medicine, government, education, etc., and remain complacent? We stand, in consciousness, midway between divine men and men-to-be. Nature embraces ALL. We are UNITED. One vast evolutionary BROTHERHOOD makes the living of the "higher life" the most natural and easiest way for us to exist.

RANDOM NOTES FROM "THE THEOSOPHIST"

ABNORMAL POWERS AND EXPERIENCES

[Replying to a correspondent, H.P.B. wrote:]

We regret our inability to concur in the suggestion to suppress discussion of the occult powers of nature, since that is the only thing most needed to extinguish superstition and sweep away *false* religions from the face of the earth.

(August 1882)

[In reply to a correspondent's questions about omens H.P.B. stated in an Editor's Note:]

It cannot be denied that there are correspondences, relationships and mutual attractions and repulsions in Nature, the existence of which scientific research is constantly making more apparent. Nor can it be contradicted that, under this law, the theory of omens and portents has some basis of truth. But the credulity of the superstitious has carried the matter to absurd lengths. The subject is too vast to enter upon until we have exhausted the more important branches of Occultism.

(July 1882)

[The following Editorial comments were appended to a review of two works by Baron Karl du Prel, *Die Weltstellung des Menschen* (The Cosmic Position of Man), and *Das Janus-Gesicht des Menschen* (The Janus-facedness of Man). The reviewer wrote: "Suppose our senses could be made to undergo some change, while the universe remained all along the same, it is evident quite a new world would arise before us, though objectively and materially the world would be exactly the same it was before." To this the following footnote was appended.]

And this is precisely the change claimed by the initiated adepts of Occultism; and that alone is sufficient to account for their great opposition to many a scientific action of modern science and the greater trustworthiness of the teachings of the former. Once that we admit the possibility of such a "change," and as a result therefrom, the greater acuteness and perfection of all their senses — granting even that the 6th and 7th senses do not exist for anyone outside those who claim either of them or both, and thus cannot be proved scientifically — we have to admit at

any rate that they see, hear, taste, feel, and smell more acutely than the rest of humanity, untrained and uninitiated, how can we then avoid trusting more in *their* than in our senses? And yet the same traveller who will unhesitatingly trust the acuteness of the eye or ear of his Red-Indian guide in preference to his own — will deny the existence and even the possibility of a series of such faculties being developed in an Asiatic *adept*!

[The reviewer stated, apparently giving the thought of Karl du Prel himself: "*Hallucination* is the magic word in the mouth of every Materialist whenever one man professes to have perceived a phenomenon which he, the materialist, in consequence of some modified organization, cannot perceive. He will not understand that one and the same objective world, may and must appear subjectively different to different organizations." This elicited the following footnote.]

Apart and quite distinct from the variety in the subjective perceptions of the one and same object — by mankind in general — stands the *unvarying* perception of the trained Occultist. Perceiving the *actuality*, for *him* the modes of the presentation of an object cannot vary; for the initiated adept perceives and discerns the ultimate and actual state of things in nature by means of his spiritual perception, trammelled by none of his physical senses, and only when the former have been called forth from their latent into their active state and developed sufficiently to stand the final tests of initiation. Therefore, this abnormal (in our present race only) faculty has nought to do with the common perceptions and their various modes, and if the materialist is sceptical as to the latter, how can he be made to believe in the existence of the former — a faculty of which he knows less than of the man in the moon!

(February 1884)

[Purna Chundra Sen, a practising homoeopath, having written to *The East* describing the cure by mesmeric treatment on the part of Colonel Olcott of two of his relatives, the Editor of *The East* wrote: "Surely our correspondent does not mean to say that miracles are possible even at this fag end of the nineteenth century. If not, then why this attempt at ascribing these alleged cures to supernatural agencies?" H.P.B. reprinted this in *The Theosophist* and commented as follows:]

Mirabile dictu! The esteemed Editor of *The East* must surely have been labouring under a biological hallucination at the time of penning his — to say the least — ill-humoured remark. What is there in Mr

Purna Chundra Sen's above-quoted letter to make him suspect his correspondent of making an attempt to ascribe Col. Olcott's cures to "supernatural agencies"? Are the words "wonderful recovery," "skilfulness in Mesmerism," "wonderful ability," etc., etc., synonyms of "supernatural agencies"? The Theosophists do not, as a rule — least of all the Founders — believe in, or attribute, anything whatsoever to "miracle" or *supernaturalism*; nor do they ever allow their members, if they can help it, to have any such superstitious ideas "at this fag end of the nineteenth century." We do not find in the above-quoted letter one word reminding in the remotest way of any "superstition." Had Mr. Purna Chundra Sen, or the President-Founder, attributed his cures to the intervention of God or Divine Providence, then would the ill-humoured remark have indeed its, *raison d'être*. But we suspect that it is just because of his letter being quite innocent of any such gushy allusion — some people laying all and everything at the door of that hypothetical Providence — that the Editor or *The East* went out of his way to send a thrust into his correspondent. Nor are Colonel Olcott's cures likely to ever become any less *hona fide* and real, for their being called by all the editors the world over only — "alleged" cures.

(*Supplement*, May 1883)

[The following appeared under the title "Paragraph Flashes from the Four Quarters."]

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in a recent issue published an account of the resuscitation of a young girl by the *Will-Power* of a man. It appears that the girl had accidentally fallen into a tank near the *Patrika's* office, and it was full ten minutes before she was taken out, evidently drowned and dead. A native gentleman, who happened to be on the spot, made energetic efforts to revive her. He concentrated his attention, made mesmeric passes, his limbs all the while quivering fearfully, and finally succeeded in making his subject throw up the water she had swallowed. When questioned how he had managed to restore the girl, he replied that he had done so by his *Will-Power* alone. The occurrence was too good, as affording an illustration of the scope of *Yog-Vidya*, to be omitted from this journal. But before publishing it, we have taken care to authenticate it. And we have very great pleasure in saying that the occurrence, as related in the *Patrika*, is true. The girl was saved by a brother of a Fellow of our Society in Calcutta, both of whom have for some time past been practising the *Bhakti-Yog*.

(September 1881)

[The following footnotes were appended to a letter from Mr. Henry C. Atkinson of Boulogne, France. "As this excellent and most esteemed gentleman," H.P.B. wrote, "seems to labour under certain erroneous impressions with regard to Theosophy and its promoters, he will pardon us if, in publishing his remarks we explain to him his mistakes." His statements, on which the notes are based, are given here in brackets.]

["Why there should be any mystery in respect to membership and the deeds and doings of your members, I cannot conceive; it reminds one of Pythagoras and his secret cave."]

We can assure our esteemed correspondent that he is quite mistaken. There is *no* "mystery" in either the membership or "the deeds and doings" of our members as Theosophists. With the exception of certain simple passwords, etc., given at the time when a candidate for fellowship is received into the Society, and a necessary convenience in so polyglot an association as ours, there is nothing secret in it, whatsoever, and if the passwords and grip are not divulged to the general public, it is simply to protect our members from being imposed upon by some unprincipled travelling outsiders, who might otherwise claim help from, and abuse the confidence of, the "universal Brotherhood" under a plea of Fellowship. There is a small fraction in the Society of those who study the occult sciences — and whose number hardly amounts to a half per cent of the whole group of Fellows. These certainly have their secrets and will not give them out. But it is unfair to visit the sin (if sin it is) of the very few upon the whole Society which in India and Ceylon alone has already 67 Branch Societies, and most of whose Fellows never gave a thought even to mesmerism — let alone the Secret sciences.

["Why you should consider mesmerism to be an occult and secret science is beyond my comprehension."]

Again Mr. Atkinson labours under an erroneous impression. No one in our Society considers mesmerism *per se* "an occult and secret science," though it is an important factor in occultism; least of all has our President-Founder treated it as a mystery, for, as our correspondent may see for himself in the *Supplements* of our journal for March, April, May, June, and July, while healing the sick on his tour in the Bengal Presidency, Col. Olcott made it a point to teach publicly mesmerism to the respectable medical and other members of our various Societies, and even instructed in it qualified outsiders.

["Can any one science be more occult or secret than another?"]

Some of the discoveries of certain sciences — such as chemistry and physical science — ought to have been kept "occult," at any rate. It is very questionable whether the secrets of gunpowder, nitro-glycerine, dynamite and the like, have more benefited than wronged humanity; at least they ought to have been withheld from the knowledge of the ignorant and unprincipled portions of mankind. Such, at least, was the opinion of Faraday, and some other great men of science. And this may explain, perhaps, why the occultists *will not* give out their even more perilous secrets promiscuously.

[“I have been much engaged with mesmerism or animal magnetism, but it never occurred to me that there was anything particularly occult or secret about it. Those words would not at any rate equally apply to any science, from astronomy to chemistry and electricity, etc. Our object should be to reduce ‘wonders’ to plain things, not to inflate plain things into wonders.”]

Quite so; and therefore, the leaders of the Society do their best to uproot superstition and prove to their members that since such a thing as *miracle* is an impossibility and belief in it an absurdity, the most wonderful phenomena, *if genuine*, must have a natural explanation, however occult the agency behind them may seem at present.

[“Tyndall is right . . . to fix a new definition to matter and it is this. ‘If these statements startle, it is because matter has been defined and maligned by philosophers and theologians who were equally unaware that it is at bottom essentially mystical and transcendental.’”]

Professor Tyndall was anticipated in his opinion on matter by most of the great Philosophers of India. Perhaps Mr. Atkinson is not aware that the Eastern Occultists hold that there is but one element in the universe — infinite, uncreated and indestructible — MATTER; which element manifests itself in seven states — four of which are now known to modern science, and which include the state of *Radiant matter* discovered by Mr. Crookes, and that three are to be yet discovered in the West. *Spirit* is the highest state of that matter, they say, since that which is neither matter nor any of its attributes is — NOTHING. We would recommend in reference to this question the perusal of an article headed “What is Force and what is Matter?” in the September number of *The Theosophist*, 1882.
(July 1883)

[In a letter to H. P. Blavatsky, C. H. Van der Linden sought

an explanation of certain unusual experiences that had befallen him and enclosed a letter written by him to Col. Bundy of the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, on the same subject. He said: "Some will call me insane, others a dreamer, the majority of humanity an impostor." To this H.P.B. replied:]

Most undoubtedly they will; and every member of the Theosophical Society — unless he keeps all such occult and psychological personal experience to himself and strictly secret — must be prepared for it. A public (including the best society) — ready at any day to turn round upon its *idols* and *authorities* and, dashing them to pieces, to pelt them with stones and trample into the mud such eminent men of science as Professors Hare and Zöllner, Messrs. Wallace and Crookes, for no better reason than that they found themselves compelled to recognize certain phenomena as *facts* and to honestly proclaim them as such — is not likely to show itself more lenient towards such humble individuals as we are.

[In telling of his experiences he said: "A few days ago my wife had agonizing cramps in the abdomen. I magnetized her, making unintentionally in my motions, the figure of the five-pointed star over the suffering parts and lo! the cramp disappeared as by enchantment. . . . Has this sign anything to do with it?"

His letter to Col. Bundy spoke of his lying at midnight "dozing but conscious. . . ." He noticed near his bed a "person in ancient garb" who said to him: "Unknowingly you used a secret to relieve your wife's pains a few days ago, which secret, when generally known, would change the practice of medicine to a very great extent. . . . I will teach you how to apply it personally. . . . only one promise I *demand* in return. . . . never reveal the secret of it to anyone outside your own family. . . ." In conclusion the writer said: "Science itself becomes corrupt, for it refuses to either accept or investigate facts." To this H.P.B. remarked:]

Many men of science do, on the contrary. But it requires a man of no ordinary moral courage to face the storm of criticism which the avowal of such investigations — especially when successful — brings upon the experimenter. See Professor Zöllner's *Transcendental Physics*, and *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, by Wm. Crookes, F.R.S., and judge for yourself.

[Editor's Closing Note] Such visitations by "Orientals" as the one with which our Brother, Mr. Van der Linden was favoured, become rather frequent in our days. We have several letters to the same effect. No

explanation, however, we venture to say, would do any good, unless preceded by a long study and a *thorough understanding* of the occult laws of "magnetic correspondences" so-called. First let us see whether by the accumulation of testimony for identical results, we have a right to include this mysterious influence among *facts*. It is premature for us to speak of such things when even the scientific hypothesis of Professor Zöllner's fourth dimension of space finds so little favour in the eyes of the materialist. Meanwhile, we append to this contribution another letter upon the same subject from a Parsee gentleman, an F.T.S., a full-blown sceptic but yesterday, but whose scepticism was a little staggered by the same results.

[The letter appended to the above was from Darasha Dosha-bhoy. Besides relating an experience similar to the one of C. H. Van der Linden, with regard to the effects of the pentagram, he wrote of having been much impressed by a story of Reincarnation written by a Kshatriya lady, and published in *The Theosophist* (Vol. II, May 1881). He said: "I now find that the lady's story confirms my suspicions as it stands to reason that as nothing increases or decreases in this perishable world of matter, the *atma* of one as soon as it leaves the frame or body enters into another. . . . I am still half sceptical about what it is or what it should be. . . ."]

What it is or "should be" is incapable of scientific demonstration. What it *is not* and *cannot* be is pretty well verified though. It is neither "harp" nor "wings" on a bodiless head with nothing but its ears to sit upon — and that alone is a comfort.

(July 1881)

It is only a poor sort of happiness that could ever come by caring very much about our own narrow pleasures. We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with true greatness, by having wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves.

—GEORGE ELIOT

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The mind-brain relationship has increasingly excited the attention of present-day researchers in the realms of the psychic and the paranormal. During the past year, the Parapsychology Foundation concentrated on studies related to the brain and mind and devoted its annual international conference to intensive discussions and reports of research in these areas. (*Parapsychology Review*, January-February 1979)

The results of continued studies in this field were summed up by Dr. Wilder Penfield shortly before his death:

Now, perhaps the time has come when we might profitably consider the evidence as it stands, and ask the question: *Do brain-mechanisms account for the mind? If not, which is the more reasonable of the two hypotheses: that man's being is based on one element or on two?* On the basis of either hypothesis the nature of the mind remains, still, a mystery that science has not solved. But it is, I believe, a mystery that science will solve some day. In that day of understanding, I predict that true prophets will rejoice, for they will discover in the scientists a long-awaited ally in the search for Truth.

The mind's relationship to the brain is a subject of importance to students of Theosophy. H.P.B. said that "the human brain is simply the canal between two planes—the psycho-spiritual and the material—through which every abstract and metaphysical idea filters from the Manasic down to the lower human consciousness" (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 25*, p. 5). And elsewhere she quotes Professor George T. Ladd, author of *Elements of Physiological Psychology*, who, having shown that we have to regard consciousness as a unit, observes:

We conclude, then, from the previous considerations: *the subject of all the states of consciousness is a real unit-being, called Mind; which is of non-material nature, and acts and develops according to laws of its own, but is specially correlated with certain material molecules and masses forming the substance of the Brain.*

H.P.B. adds:

This "Mind" is *manas*, or rather its lower reflection, which whenever it disconnects itself, for the time being, with *kama*, becomes the guide of the highest mental faculties, and is the organ of the free will in physical man. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, pp. 51-52)

“Once upon a time there was, beyond the strait you call ‘The Pillars of Hercules,’ an island larger than Asia Minor and Libya together. . . . On this island of Atlantis there existed a great and admirable kingdom.” Thus Plato in his dialogue *Timaeus* (350 B.C.). He describes Atlantis further in another dialogue, *Critias*. For centuries prior to 9000 B.C., Plato said, the Atlanteans were the dominant civilization in their half of the world, ruling a Mediterranean empire that extended to the borders of Egypt and Italy. They strove to create a nation in which brotherhood and morality were pre-eminent values. But eventually, wrote Plato, they became “obsessed with the wrongful pursuit of material gain and power” and tried to conquer the entire Mediterranean world, but were beaten back. Then, according to Plato, “in a single dreadful day and a single dreadful night,” Atlantis was swallowed up by the sea.

In later ages, Plato’s description of Atlantis came to be looked upon as a myth, but it has continued to arouse interest and speculation. Some 10,000 books and articles have been written on the subject.

Thomas Fleming’s article, “Solving the Lost-Continent Mystery,” in the April *Reader’s Digest* (Indian edition) is based on Otto Heinrich Muck’s book, *The Secret of Atlantis*. We are told:

Muck’s studies in geophysics and history led him on a passionate quest to solve the riddle of Atlantis. He brought to the task his skills as a mathematician and his encyclopaedic knowledge of modern science. The result was a best-selling book published in Germany in 1976, 20 years after his death. . . .

Muck began with a daring assumption: *Plato’s description should be accepted as realistic in almost every respect*. He then ransacked a dozen sciences to see if evidence could be found that supported — or at least did not contradict — Plato’s account. . . .

Many of the theories propounded by Muck are disputed by scientists; but the fact remains that the continent of Atlantis *did* once exist and *was* swallowed by the sea. *The Secret Doctrine* abounds in references to this lost continent, and the following few quotations indicate the trend of Theosophic teaching on the subject:

“Atlantis” is the Fourth Continent. It would be the first historical land, were the traditions of the ancients to receive more attention than they have hitherto. The famous island of Plato of that name was but a fragment of this great Continent. . . . Atlantis sunk and its chief portions had disappeared before the end of the Miocene period. (II. 8)

The Atlanteans were the same as the Titans and the giants. (II. 265)

That not only the last island of Atlantis, spoken of by Plato, but a large continent, first divided, and then broken later on into seven peninsulas and islands . . . preceded Europe, is sure. It covered the whole of the North and South Atlantic regions, as well as portions of the North and South Pacific, and had islands even in the Indian Ocean (relics of Lemuria). The claim is corroborated by Indian Puranas, Greek writers, and Asiatic, Persian, and Mahommedan traditions. (II. 405)

The civilization of the Atlanteans was greater even than that of the Egyptians. It is their degenerate descendants, the nation of Plato's Atlantis, which built the first Pyramids in the country, and that certainly before the advent of the "Eastern Ethiopians," as Herodotus calls the Egyptians. (II. 429)

Among other arts and sciences, the ancients — ay, as an heirloom from the Atlanteans — had those of astronomy and symbolism, which included the knowledge of the Zodiac. (II. 431)

Fossils found on the Eastern Coast of South America have now been proved to belong to the Jurassic formations, and are nearly identical with the Jurassic fossils of Western Europe and Northern Africa. The geological structure of both coasts is also almost identical; the resemblance between the smaller marine animals dwelling in the more shallow waters of South America, the Western African, and the South European coasts, is also very great. All such facts are bound to bring naturalists to the conclusion that there has been, in distant pre-historic ages, a continent which extended from the coast of Venezuela, across the Atlantic Ocean, to the Canarese Islands and North Africa, and from Newfoundland nearly to the coast of France. (II. 791)

Now if we compare the 9,000 years mentioned by the Persian tales with the 9,000 years, which Plato declared had passed since the submersion of the last Atlantis, a very strange fact is made apparent, Bailly remarked, but distorted it by his interpretation. The Secret Doctrine may restore the figures to their true meaning. "First of all," we read in *Critias* that "one must remember that 9,000 years have elapsed since the war of the nations, which lived above and outside the Pillars of Hercules, and those which peopled the lands on this side." In *Timaeus* Plato says the same. The Secret Doctrine declaring that most of the later islander Atlanteans perished in the interval between 850,000 and 700,000 years ago, and that the Aryans were 200,000 years old when the first

great "island" or continent was submerged, there hardly seems any reconciliation possible between the figures. But there is, in truth. Plato, being an Initiate, had to use the veiled language of the Sanctuary, and so had the Magi of Chaldea and Persia, through whose exoteric revelations the Persian legends were preserved and passed to posterity. . . . They of Plato's day, the initiated writers, at any rate, meant by a millennium, not a thousand but 100,000 years. . . . Thus, when saying 9,000 years, the Initiates will read 900,000 years, during which space of time — *i.e.*, from the first appearance of the Aryan race, when the Pliocene portions of the once great Atlantis began gradually sinking and other continents to appear on the surface, down to the final disappearance of Plato's small island of Atlantis, the Aryan races had never ceased to fight with the descendants of the first giant races. This war lasted till nearly the close of the age which preceded the Kali Yug, and was the Mahabharatean war so famous in Indian History. Such blending of the events and epochs, and the bringing down of hundreds of thousands into thousands of years, does not interfere with the numbers of years that had elapsed, according to the statement made by the Egyptian priests to Solon, since the destruction of the last portion of Atlantis. The 9,000 years were the correct figures given. The latter event has never been kept a secret, and had only faded out of the memory of the Greeks. (II. 394-95)

In the three-and-a-half centuries since Shakespeare's death, a host of theories have been advanced challenging the authorship of his works. What started as mere scepticism has now bloomed into literature's greatest controversy. No less than a score of "true Shakespeares" have been espoused. Sailesh Kottary's article, "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" in the *Sunday Standard* (Bombay) for May 13, examines the claims of the leading contenders to the mantle of Shakespeare, ranging from the nobility (Earls of Oxford and Essex), to the literati (Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe), to nonentities (Anne Whateley).

The origin of the controversy [the author writes] lies essentially in the breathtaking brilliance of Shakespeare's works coupled with his humble origin and the ordinariness of his life. It is no mean task to reconcile that the son of a burgess with only formal schooling, would eventually outclass the titans of his age.

Further, Shakespeare's plays deal with subjects as diverse as court politics, history, geography, law, etc., a broad knowledge of

which is inconceivable in an obscure actor. Again the preponderance of noble personages in his plays, together with his accurate portrayal of royal speech and custom, are all suggestive of an author who was well-born and familiar with court detail. And finally, the curious absence of his manuscripts strongly compounds the aura of mystery. . . .

Admittedly, there is a consensus that Shakespeare's plays at best were never entirely a product of his own imagination. That the Roman plays are drawn heavily from Plutarch, cannot be denied. The plot for *The Comedy of Errors* is from the *Menaechmi* and from the *Amphitruo* of Plautus. The plots of *Measure for Measure* and *Othello* belong to the genius of the Italian, Giraldi Cinthio. Among the multitude of sources adapted by Shakespeare, we find Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, Robert Greene's *Pandosto* and *The Triumph of Time*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and Aristo's *Orlando Furioso*.

But the moot case remains — who wrote Shakespeare? Even four centuries after his birth, the question has not been satisfactorily answered.

Shakespeare, like Aeschylus, "was and will ever remain the intellectual 'Sphinx' of the ages," wrote H.P.B. (*The Secret Doctrine*, II. 419). But who was Shakespeare? What was the power behind his plays? To students of Theosophy, the available references in the authentic literature, though few and far between, are sufficiently suggestive to indicate the Occult World's estimate of Shakespeare and of his message. We have Mr. Judge's famous statement: "The Adepts assert that Shakespeare was, unconsciously to himself, inspired by one of their own number." "My good friend — Shakespeare," wrote one of the Mahatmas, quoting from him in a letter. And in her editorial opening the first volume of *Lucifer*, H.P.B. wrote: . . .

"Shakespeare's deep and accurate science in mental philosophy" (Coleridge) has proved more beneficent to the true philosopher in the study of the human heart — therefore, in the promotion of truth — than the more accurate, but certainly less deep, science of any Fellow of the Royal Institution.

Shakespeare, then, can be regarded as a real and magnificent creative genius of the type described by H.P.B. in her article on "Genius," who, coming under Nirmanakayic influence, became a myriad-minded master of life and literature. His amazing and expansive knowledge of the superphysical and the invisible, his profound and penetrating insight

into human nature, his transcendent and kaleidoscopic imagination, his intuitive perception and his inspired poetry — all these are at once the expression and the evidence of the inwardness of his plays, and of the influence of the Adepts. Literature has been one of the major channels used by the Great Fraternity to instruct the human race. The student of Theosophy of the present generation may well be advised to look at the firmament of Literature with a view to imbibing the Adept influence which radiates therefrom.

Under the title "The Case of the Psychic Detective," Laile Bartlett writes in the April *Reader's Digest* (Indian edition) about former Canadian police officer Reginald McHugh, who is reputed to catch shoplifters by extra-sensory perception. He has the uncanny ability of "seeing" shoplifters at work minutes, hours, or even days before the actual occurrence, by feeling "vibes," as he puts it. His special abilities have been featured in the press and he has appeared in a television documentary with some of the world's leading psychics and parapsychologists. As stated in the article:

Reg McHugh's reputation as a detective with extraordinary abilities began to develop when he first started with the burgeoning Shoppers Drug Mart chain more than ten years ago. Since then, armed with "a special feeling" or "extra help from out there," he estimates that he has apprehended thousands of shoplifters, sometimes catching as many as seven in one afternoon and 50 in one month. In his first two years in one store, he helped cut total shoplifting losses from Rs. 6 lakhs to less than Rs. 3.2. lakhs.

Top company executives and detectives attest to the superiority of Reg's record. "He's no ordinary detective, he has a special knack," says Barry Phillips, owner of Toronto's Jane and Finch Streets branch. Murray Grossman, owner of the Eglinton Square store in Scarborough recalls: "We hired Reg on speculation, but kept him on his record. I have seen him in court with 30 shoplifters at a time."

Co-workers have struggled for words to describe Reg's talent. Some say merely that he has "eyes in the back of his head." Others call it *telepathy* (picking up people's thoughts), *clairvoyance* (sensing what is then happening — at a distance), or *precognition* (predicting future events).

Once, Reg recalls, he warned the Eglinton Square Shoppers Drug Mart staff that he'd "seen" a youth take two containers of

insulin from the dispensary refrigerator, put them in his left-hand trouser pocket and leave. An hour and a half later, dispensary personnel saw a youth enter the store and steal the insulin — exactly as Reg had described. . . .

Reg's "methods" took many forms. At times, he would find himself staring at a shelf full of goods, only to see an item temporarily disappear — a sure sign that it would, in fact, be stolen. Sometimes, too, he'd "see" someone at the end of the store stealing an item. When he shook the vision away, there would be no one there. But he knew that theft was going to happen, and so it would.

Mr. Judge has clearly explained the rationale of clairvoyance or "second sight" in *The Ocean of Theosophy*, Chapter XVI:

In the Astral Light are pictures of all things whatsoever that happened to any person, and as well also pictures of those events to come, the causes for which are sufficiently well marked and made. If the causes are yet indefinite, so will be the images of the future. But for the mass of events for several years to come all the producing and efficient causes are always laid down with enough definiteness to permit the seer to see them in advance as if present. By means of these pictures, seen with the inner senses, all clairvoyants exercise their strange faculty. Yet it is a faculty common to all men, though in the majority but slightly developed; but occultism asserts that were it not for the germ of this power slightly active in every one no man could convey to another any idea whatsoever.

In clairvoyance the pictures in the Astral Light pass before the inner vision and are reflected into the physical eye from within. They then appear objectively to the seer. If they are of past events or those to come, the picture only is seen; if of events actually then occurring, the scene is perceived through the Astral Light by the inner sense. . . . Second-sight is a combination of clairaudience and clairvoyance, or not, just as the particular case is, and the frequency with which future events are seen by the second-sight seer adds an element of prophecy. . . .

The celebrated science writer Isaac Asimov's article on "Cycles" in *The Saturday Evening Post* (U.S.A.) for March 1979 stresses the fact that man cannot tamper with the rhythm of nature without somehow compensating for the disruption. On our earth, things move in cycles —

a fact now accepted by scientists — and this is why, says the author, “after 4.6 billion years of existence, our planet is still young, active, and full of life.” And he gives some examples of how cycles work and maintain the balance of nature:

Water runs from the uplands to the sea, quickly as rivers and seepingly as ground water. It may delay awhile and collect in ponds and lakes, but it always ends in the ocean (or, occasionally, in inland seas). It is a natural flow under the pull of gravity.

Why hasn't all the water ended in the sea and left the land desert-dry billions of years ago? Because that's only half the cycle.

The other half, powered by the energy of the sun's radiation, evaporates water from the ocean surface, raises water vapour by the millions of tons a couple of miles into the air, carries it over land, and drops it as rain.

A second example: Animals convert food and oxygen into carbon dioxide and water. And yet year after year the food does not cease, the oxygen does not vanish from the air, we do not choke on carbon dioxide — that's only half the cycle. Plants, powered by the light of the sun, convert carbon dioxide and water into food and oxygen. That's the other half.

A third example: Animals produce wastes, urine, and feces, which they distribute freely over the land. Animals, and plants as well, die, and corpses and dead-wood litter the landscape. The other half of the cycle consists of scavenging animals and microscopic forms of life that utilize the wastes and the dead, restoring them to the kind of compounds that the plant world can use, and then the animal world as well....

There are countless examples of completed cycles that keep the earth fresh and new; they have been doing so for billions of years, may continue to do so for billions of years more as long as the sunshine supplies the basic energy and as long as humanity does not spoil it all.

For now humanity and its technology are on the scene, and in every direction change is carried through half a cycle. Rich pockets of ore, slowly collected over many millions of years by geological processes, are smelted for metals, the metals are used in devices, the devices are finally discarded and allowed to rust or just to lie there. Trees are chopped down, wood is converted to paper and myriad paper products, the paper products are used and thrown away. Our industrial processes produce myriads of chemicals that nature has either never seen or that it has not seen pro-

duced in so concentrated a form; and those chemicals are discarded into the air, or water, or soil.

In short, technology seems to be a way of converting natural resources into trash—or pollution, if you prefer—at an enormous and accelerating rate. Some of the pollution can be recycled by natural processes, but not at a rate equal to that of its production. Some pollution consists of new products, invented by human beings, that can't be recycled at all by natural processes.

What's to be done?

Clearly, if one-half of the cycle (the downward half) has been accelerated by human activity, this must be made up for by a deliberate program designed to accelerate the other, upward half of the cycle....

The advantage of the human effort is not only that it is certain and quick but that it can turn pollution into useful products (as bacteria do when they break down natural wastes).... Except for radioactive wastes (which are a special problem) there are no forms of pollution produced by man that can't be unpolluted given three things: energy, human ingenuity and determination, and time....

The upward half of the cycle must take no longer than the downward half or we won't be able to keep up. This means we must not only speed depollution as much as we can, but we must hold back on pollution; find out ways of decreasing pollution without braking our technology, and that can be done—given human ingenuity and determination.
