

THROUGH THE GATEWAY OF DEATH

A MESSAGE TO THE BEREAVED

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Dedication

I gratefully dedicate this book to my value friend and helper, Miss N.K.Griffith of Auckland, who for many years has helped to maintain the conditions under which my more recent literary work has been done.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Portion of this book, *which is addressed especially to those who are bereaved and in need of consolation*, have appeared in a wartime booklet, published by the New Zealand Section of the Theosophical Society under the title *The Mystery of Death*. I gratefully acknowledge permission to use, in an amended form, extracts from that booklet.

I must also express gratitude to my friends Roma and Brian Dunningham for their generosity throughout many years and the provision of much-needed stenographers.

PREFACE

THE pain caused by bereavement can at first be so great that both heart and mind are closed to all healing and to all light. Death seems to bring final, irrevocable loss; to be a judgment from which there is no appeal.

This book is written primarily to bring the consolation and the illumination of the teachings of Theosophy to those who have suffered such bereavement, and also to provide information for those seeking knowledge concerning man and, more especially, his life after death.

Theosophy affirms that, since the Spiritual Soul of man is immortal, it is only the body which dies. In their essential nature, power of understanding and love, their life interests, character and human traits, the departed have not died. The well-known, well-loved human being lives on after bodily death. He but goes to another world, somewhat removed from this one it is true, but still quite near. The separation is not irrevocable; those who love and have been parted by death will meet again.

Theosophy tells whither the deceased have gone, under what conditions they now exist and how reunion will occur. Definitely and precisely, Theosophy answers all questions of the sorrowing heart. It offers neither vague tenets nor Scriptural texts alone and makes no appeal to blind faith; for its teachings are founded upon centuries of scientifically conducted research, the results of which have been checked and counter-checked by successive generations of trained Seers.

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The Source of Theosophical Knowledge

A Method of Meditation

Theosophy and the Theosophical Society

CHAPTER

THE MEANS OF RESEARCH

The Long, Mysterious Exodus of Death

THE subject of the life after death can scarcely fail to be of the greatest interest and importance to every one of us; for who is there among us who has not been called upon to experience the pain of bereavement, felt a desire to know where the loved ones have gone and something of the conditions of the life after death into

which they have entered and upon which we must all embark when our time comes, as one day inevitably it must? "The long, mysterious exodus of death", as it has been called, is therefore a subject which we do well to consider.

Many questions present themselves. Here are some of them:

Does death bring the extinction of human identity? Were the deceased aware of the immediate approach of death?

Were they conscious of the process of dying?

How is the life after death entered upon?

To what conditions does the Soul awaken after death? Is there continuity of personality, with memory, affection, sympathy and continued interests? Is there time, business, work, pressure there, or is one free of these in the life after death?

May we hope for reunion with those we love and who have passed away? What should we offer to death? Can one make plans for one's life after the death of the body?

The Body Alone is Mortal

The teachings of Theosophy possess especial power to console the bereaved and to illumine those who seek knowledge of the life after death. Theosophy has power to console because it affirms most positively that there is a life beyond the grave, that the body alone dies, whilst the immortal Son of God, the real Ego, lives on eternally. Theosophy reaffirms the great teaching in the Bible (*The Apocrypha*) which gives the solution to the problem of life after death in the words: "For God created man for immortality, and made him the image of his own eternity." (*The Wisdom of Solomon*, II. 23.) A Hindu Scripture affirms the same truth:

" Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never; Never was time it was not; End and Beginning are dreams! Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit forever; Death hath not touched it all, dead though at the house of it seems." -*The Song Celestial*, Sir Edwin Arnold.

There, if we can receive it, is the real answer to the question as to whether life continues after death. Theosophy teaches that the spiritual Soul of man, his true, divine Self, is immortal, eternal and indestructible. Furthermore, this undying Soul of man is evolving to perfection through the experiences of many lives on earth. It is only the body which dies and not the true Self of man, the real individuality behind the bodily veil. Such, then, is the answer to the first of our questions.

Research by Extra-Sensory Perception

Theosophy has power to illumine also, because it shows how man may know for himself, while still on this earth, the facts of the life beyond the grave. It teaches that there resides in man a faculty by means of which the veil hiding the invisible world from our sight may be rent asunder and the facts and phenomena of that world, the conditions of life in it, may be seen, investigated and understood. This extended vision, which is a sixth sense, latent in the majority, awakened in a few, will be used quite normally and naturally by later Races. When developed in these days, this faculty enables its possessor to do what later Races of mankind will do; namely, to explore at first hand and in full waking consciousness the world of the life after death, to meet its inhabitants face to face, and to study with scientific accuracy the conditions under which they live.

This is an arresting and important statement, one which demands deep consideration. I must ask acceptance of the existence of this faculty as a hypothesis, susceptible of test and proof in due course; for almost all theosophical teachings concerning the invisible worlds are gained by the use of such extended vision as an instrument of research. Direct, positive knowledge is available and can be tested by the appropriate means of investigation; for there resides in each one of us a power of direct seership. As I have said above, this extended vision is latent in the great majority of men, is sporadically active in a few, and is susceptible of development by a process of self-training. The existence of such extra-sensory perception, or ESP as it is now called, is no longer in doubt. Scientific tests, carried out under the strictest precautions through a long period and with thousands of subjects, have proven that clairvoyance, clairaudience and telepathy are powers possessed by large numbers of people. [*The Reach of the Mind* (Penguin Series) and *New Frontiers of the Mind* (Pelican Series), Dr. J. B. Rhine]

The Collected Fruits of Research

Throughout all ages men and women, seeking to solve the mysterious of life, have submitted themselves to the training necessary to awaken from latency into activity these slumbering powers with which every man is endowed. Generations of seers, having awakened these faculties into controlled activity, have carried out researches into the normally invisible aspects of Nature and of man. The fruits of their investigations are all preserved and have been continually extended checked and counter-checked. As a result, there is available to the student of today a vast treasury of knowledge on every subject to which the mind of man can be turned. The Greeks named this wisdom of the ages *Theosophia*, Divine Wisdom, and modern man possesses a fragment of it in what today is called Theosophy.

CHAPTER II

THE PROCESS OF DYING

The Approach of Death

IF the existence of the faculty of extended vision be granted - not the negative psychism of the entranced medium, but a positive, trained power under the control of the will, just as is physical vision - then let us assume that we are in the chamber of death, watching with the "seeing eye" the transition from this world to the next of someone dying from old age or disease. We shall at once discover the answer to our second question: "Were the deceased aware of the immediate approach of death?" The answer is: "Generally, no." The failure of the supply of blood, and so of oxygen, to the brain brings on unconsciousness, a process which is just like falling asleep. Even if there has been suffering at the near approach of death, that suffering ceases before the end.

What shall we see as the process of dying is directly observed? As the hour of dissolution approaches we shall see the life-forces of the body being withdrawn from the extremities and centred in the heart, there to be visible as glowing golden light. After this, sensation in the lower limbs is greatly diminished. Then, as death draws nearer, the life-forces are withdrawn still further into the middle of the head, into the third ventricle of the brain, which is the seat of Egoic consciousness during physical life.

The dying person may or may not still be physically conscious. If unconscious, in a coma preceding death, he will be visible to clairvoyant sight out of the body in his superphysical vehicle. This vehicle is built of much finer matter than the ether, and in outline resembles almost exactly the physical body; it is, in fact, its counterpart. It differs in appearance from the physical in that the substance of which it is built is self luminous, so that it glows as if lighted from within, and it is surrounded by an atmosphere which is visible as light in constantly changing colours.

The Superphysical Vesture of the Soul

These colours of the aura, as it is called, correspond to states of consciousness and are seen to vary with every change of feeling and thought. Indeed, there exists a veritable science to which I may refer in passing - the science of the correlation of states of consciousness with the colours of the aura. A rush of sympathy for someone in pain or trouble, for example, suffuses the aura with green; intellectual effort floods it with yellow. Blue denotes devotional activity; lilac, spirituality; rose deepening to crimson, love. Red is the colour of anger and irritability; brown, of selfishness - and so on. As stated, these colours are visible to clairvoyant sight, so that by looking at people's auras it is possible to tell the kind of thoughts and feelings to which they habitually give expression, and thus to discover their

temperament and character. Naturally, such a power is not used save by permission and for research purposes.

The Silver Cord

Thus, the aura will be visible around the dying person who, physically unconscious, is then outside his physical body and floating just above it, but is joined to it by a stream of flowing forces which shine with a delicate silvery light. This current flows between the heads of the physical and the superphysical bodies, thus connecting them. So long as it continues to flow, there is always the possibility of physical awakening. Once it is broken, as at the moment of death, there is no longer any possibility of return. Cases of apparent resuscitation are in reality only reawakenings into bodies that were not dead. This is described in Christianity as follows: "Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl [the etheric double] be broken, or the pitcher [the physical body] be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (*Ecl.*, XII. 6, 7.)

The Cord Is Loosed

The dying person may return temporarily to his body and, on opening his eyes, may see some of the phenomena of the next world and make reference to people not physically present. When the actual moment of death arrives, the "silver cord" is seen to break and the man himself to rise, as though released from some gravitational pull. Although not absolutely certain, I am inclined to think that the exact moment of death for each one of us is fixed. Whether this is so or not, the moment comes, the cord breaks, the man is free of his body and can awaken in it no more. The signs of death then appear in it; its work is done.

The Past Life Reviewed

In nearly all cases man is as unconscious of dying as he is of falling asleep. He passes, as it were, upon a sigh from this world to the next. He is generally engaged in a process of review, in which the events of the life just closed pass before his mind's eye in clear perspective, causes and their effects, successes and their results, failures and their outworkings, being seen and correlated. This process of review is very important, for from it is distilled a certain wisdom - the fruitage of the life just closed. It is for this reason that we should mentally, emotionally and physically be quiet in the chamber of death, lest by an excess of grief we disturb the loved one in this important process. He is now living in his subtler body, the body of feeling, and is therefore highly sensitive to the forces of thought and emotion. Calmly and with self-control, our thoughts should rightly be turned in love towards him, and in blessing and aspiration for his progress inwards to the inner worlds. In Theosophy we are taught to dwell not so much upon our own great loss as upon his transcendent gain; and transcendent gain it is to be freed from the

physical body and its limitations *when once its valuable work is done and not before*. Such, then, is a theosophical answer to the question: " Were the deceased conscious of the process of dying? "

CHAPTER III

FIRST EXPERIENCES AFTER DEATH

The Awakening

THE review ended, there generally follows a period of complete unconsciousness which may last from thirty-six to forty-eight hours varying with the individual. Then awakening occurs and the deceased, frequently still unaware of what has happened, looks about him. In nearly all cases some friend or relative is awaiting him; or, if he has none such to welcome him, then some member of the great band of helpers whose work it is to greet newcomers comes forward to receive him. Such helpers are members of a highly trained band of servers deputed to this particular work of assisting new arrivals. [*Invisible Helpers*, C. W. Leadbeater.] They welcome newcomers, explain the change, and help them to settle down to it as comfortably as possible. Few, if any, in these days enter that world without some hand being stretched forth to welcome and to assist them in the first stages. Such is a theosophical answer to the question: " How is the life after death entered upon? "

No Strange Land

What will be the nature of this life? At this point I am going to say something which will perhaps be difficult to believe, but since I know it to be true and of great importance, I must state it. The world to which our friends have gone, and to which we will all go when our time comes, is no strange land; for we go there every night whilst our physical body sleeps. Sleep has aptly and truly been called the twin brother of death. We may go further and call them the same thing; for whilst the physical body sleeps we are awake in the body which we shall use after death. Our dreams are, in part, the confused memories of our life in that world which we bring back on awakening, such as, for instance, the pleasant, poetic, floating motion by which we move, thought-propelled, in the superphysical worlds. Hence quite naturally, the world of the life after death proves to be a familiar place. The difference between sleep and death lies in the fact that, in sleep, the "silver cord" which links us to the body is not broken. In death the cord *is* broken and, as we then have no link with the physical body, we can return to it no more.

The superphysical world and state of consciousness entered at death consist of two divisions or planes of Nature, the emotional or astral and the mental. The former, the emotional, contains human and angelic inhabitants, and scenery [*The Astral Plane*, C. W. Leadbeater.] and other forms visible to the deceased. The

latter, the mental, also has its own inhabitants and phenomena, but the experience of the departed whilst living there is more subjective and individual. [*The Devachanic Plane*, C. W. Leadbeater.]

The Influence of Temperament and Character

The next general principle which I wish to advance is that the conditions in which a person finds himself after death depend largely upon his temperament, and upon the nature of the life he has led on the physical plane. We each see the world around us through the windows of our temperament. The sunny natured, friendly individual awakens after death to a sunny, friendly world; whilst the gloomy, self-centered hypochondriac may awaken to a dull, gloomy and somewhat lonely world - not because that world is lonely, but because the self-centered individual does not inspire and is unable to give friendship. Happily, the pain, the boredom and the isolation which such people have unconsciously created for themselves, spur them into changing their attitude towards life.

CHAPTER IV

VARIED ACTIVITIES AFTER DEATH

The Scientist After Death

To move now from general to particular statements, clairvoyant research reveals a tendency in new arrivals to pursue after death sublimated forms of those occupations which most appealed to them on earth. Thus, the scientific investigator whose ideal on earth was the pursuit of truth, finds that he can follow truth there as he did here. He also finds that his investigations are far more fruitful because he has left the world of densest matter, is conscious in much finer substance, and is nearer to the world of causes. It is in the higher consciousness and in the world of causes that truth and understanding abide.

The deceased finds that many of the factors in the structure of matter and in evolution which were previously hidden from him are now objectively revealed. The laws and forces under which atoms combine in certain ways to form the molecules of the different elements, the development from protoplasm to cell and from single cell to man - the great mystery for the biologist - these things are understood more clearly there; for the operation of the Divine Mind and Its embodiments may be everywhere observed.

The flowing forces of which this physical world is an illusory product are visible as such in the next world. The great engineers of the Logos, the Beings who direct the flow of these forces, operating and administering the processes and laws of Nature - the Angelic Hosts- can be seen at work and the scientific investigator thus finds himself in a realm in which his work is far more fruitful than it was on earth.

Indeed, in the after-death world one finds groups of scientists gathered together by affinity of temperament, absorbed in their accustomed pursuit of knowledge, equipped with laboratories, observatories and research stations, and not only investigating but teaching as well. There is, indeed, a continuation of education there, educationists, like scientists and all other specialised workers, tending to follow their own bent, giving their time to unravelling the problems met with in their work, and to the carrying of that work to a higher state of perfection than was possible on earth. Sometimes, ideas, thus discovered in the inner world are picked up by minds incarnate here on earth; for there is considerable interplay and interchange of thought between the dwellers in the two worlds.

The Artist and the Quest of Beauty

Similarly, the artist, he for whom beauty is the goal, finds that in that world his quest can be carried far nearer to its consummation than was possible in the world of dense physical matter. If he be painter or sculptor, no longer need he with effort reproduce his concepts in the dull pigments of earth, for instantly and automatically the responsive matter of the next world assumes forms appropriate to his thought. Not only is his vision objectively before him, but he finds to his great joy that he can refine and remould it until relative perfection is attained. Thus, because groups are drawn together in that world by affinity of temperament rather than by racial or family relationship, he finds himself nearer to his own kind, a member, probably, of one of the many groups of similar workers dedicated to the pursuit of beauty, to the discovery of their Highest Selves through the medium of the beautiful.

Music and Music Forms

For the musician, too, the way is open to a wider, deeper understanding of his art. Music has, on the inner planes, aspects of which we normally know little down here. The musician finds, for example, that sound there is not so much heard as seen. If physical music is observed clairvoyantly it is seen to produce forms in the glowing, self-luminous substance of the inner worlds, this living, responsive matter being thrown into changing, iridescent forms by the sound and the intent of the music. [Thought Forms, A.Besant and C.W.Leadbeater,] In the inner planes, too, the real Song of Creation can be heard, that ever-uttered Word which is the theme of the great Symphony of Creation.

This exquisite responsiveness of the matter of the subtler worlds to every change of thought and feeling is one of the first discoveries the student makes when his inner eyes are opened. He finds, as do all who enter those worlds at death, that thought is a mighty power, potent to affect the lives of others as well as to help him on his way, if he uses it aright.

The Altruist

The reformer, the servant, the healer, the physician -each finds, if he can enter into it, a new world of service opening up before him. If he possesses the true spirit of the healer, the physician will find coming to him for help men and women with twisted minds and tortured feelings, people who have died with uneasy consciences, duties left undone, vices unconquered, obliquities of vision, complexes unresolved and other psychical disturbances. Such conditions are to a far greater extent sources of difficulty there than here, for that is the world of emotion. People thus disturbed are greatly in need of the services of a physician. There is, in fact, a great host of workers dedicated to this task of re-attuning and harmonising those in need.

Business Left Behind

The business man, for the first few days after his passing, tends to gravitate by force of habit to his old business premises; but he soon finds that he cannot affect his colleagues. They do not respond to his presence or to his thoughts. They do not even know that he is with them. Happily, however, the wider interests and greater freedom of the new life, the responsive and buoyant body he is using, his realisation that the main causes of business do not obtain here in his new sphere and that consequently there is not much to be busy about in that direction - all these things soon draw him away from his physical preoccupations. The life after death can, indeed, be the beginning of a most wonderful freedom; for the grinding business necessities which, doubtless for our own good, keep us busy here and tend to chain our thoughts and feelings to material things, no longer exist.

Food, for example, though one of the principal causes of business and personal effort on the physical plane, ceases to have any significance in the life after death, for all the nourishment our subtle bodies need is absorbed automatically from the atmosphere. The air there, as here, is charged with the life-force of God, outpoured through the sun, and contains all that is needed for bodily sustenance in that world. The whole process of its absorption and assimilation is as unconscious as is breathing on the physical plane. Food, consequently, is not a source of business activity.

Clothing is made by thought. Since the matter of the next world responds instantly to thought, to think of oneself as clothed is to be clothed. Whilst one finds people dressed in various modes of attire, in the fashion of their own day or Race, the most general raiment would seem to be a convenient, loose garment, the colour and decoration of which can be changed instantly of will.

Transportation does not depend upon the labours of others. In the superphysical worlds we move thought impelled. To think of oneself in a place is to move to that place, swiftly or slowly at will, by a delightful, floating motion as of flying. Dreams

of the body as light and easily elevated, or as gliding gently or swiftly through the air, are frequently memories of the normal mode of progression in the world of the life after death.

Shelter, the fourth of the great sources of business and human effort on the physical plane, is also created by thought in the next world. There, as here, people gather together in thought-forms of houses and cities. Privacy is needed in the after-death life just as it is needed on earth, but not shelter from the climate, for our adverse climatic conditions are not reproduced there.

Thus, life in that world can be as varied and fascinating as life on this earth; indeed, more so, for there is not only an almost endless variety of activities from which to choose, but each activity can be pursued further and for a longer period of time than on earth, where certain pressing necessities make their demands. There are, for instance, not only centres for child-life and services for the newcomer and for those in need, but in addition all the normal, healthy mental activities of human beings seeking greater light and joy and usefulness along the lines of knowledge, love and beauty.

Religion and the Religious Life

There are religious centres also, and to enter a church on that plane is to find that religion elevates the worshipper to far greater heights than are usually attained on earth. This is partly because the objects of worship are visible, being thought-created, and partly because emotion there is purer and more powerful. At the east end of the church there will not be symbols and stained-glass windows so much as living images, perhaps of the Saviours of the world, or of the Saints or the Angelic Hosts. These phantasms created by human thought are used as living representations into which their great Originals pour some of Their love and consciousness, and which They use as channels for the outpouring of Their blessing and power. Since all this is visible to the worshipper there, religious services evoke a fervour and a depth of response rarely experienced down here and provide a religious belief founded far more upon living experience than upon blind faith.

Life in the Intermediate Worlds only Transient

There is, however, no permanence in any of these conditions and states of consciousness. Every normal person who dies a natural death passes through the worlds of emotion and mind with varying speeds, until the centre of life and awareness which had been incarnated in the physical body is withdrawn into its Source, which is the Ego in the Causal Body. Whilst there are exceptions, this is the general rule and the time spent in the intermediate, astral world after death depends largely upon the degree of spirituality or materialism in the character and interests of the deceased. The ideal, naturally, is to pass as rapidly as possible

through the worlds of emotion and analytical thought into the beatitude of the heaven life, and later to full re-absorption into the Higher Self.

Such, briefly, are the theosophical answers to the three questions: "To what conditions does the Soul awaken after death?", "Is there continuity of personality, with memory, affection, sympathy and continued interests?" and "Is there time, business, work, pressure there, or is one free of these in the life after death?"

CHAPTER V

THE REUNION OF THOSE WHO LOVE

Love Itself is Immortal

SINCE bereavement is the certain lot of each and every one of us, it is inevitable that many times throughout our lives we should ask ourselves the question as to whether death means a final separation, or whether somehow and somewhere we and our loved ones will meet again. What has Theosophy to say concerning this pressing human problem? Shall we meet again or does death bring the extinction of human identity, and so the end of human relationship? Theosophy answers " Yes, very definitely those who love will be reunited." Nothing, neither death nor rebirth can break the bonds of true love. Love itself is immortal and is, moreover, the strongest force in the universe. Reunion is therefore utterly assured for all those who truly love.

The Time and Place of Reunion

When, where and how shall we meet our loved ones again? Human nature is so diverse and human life so complex, that an exposition of the subject of reunion cannot be entirely a simple one. Whilst Theosophy does teach that reunion is assured, this does not necessarily always take place in the intermediate worlds entered directly after death. Time is a factor to be considered. If we die within a few months of their death, then we go directly into the presence of our loved ones who have gone before. If several years intervene and they are withdrawn into the heaven condition of consciousness, then, when our time comes, there will a brief period without them until we in our turn enter our heaven world. Then a great revelation will come to us. We shall see and know that mentally, in terms of their consciousness, we have been with them in their heaven ever since they entered there; for heaven could never be heaven without the presence of those we love.

Many Mansions

Is this too difficult an idea to understand? I know that this theosophical concept of a self-created, individual heaven in which reunion occurs does, at first, seem to be contrary to the Christian doctrine, for example. I would ask you not to reject it too

hastily, however, for it is a very beautiful truth and one, moreover, which does not really conflict with original Christianity; for Our Lord referred to it, saying: "In my Father's house are many mansions". (*John*, XIV.2.) Simply put, it may be said that when those who love us die and enter their heaven, their thought and love construct for them a form of us which is ever present to their eyes. This is not a mere thought form only; for we in our essential Selves, as spiritual Intelligences, at once use this thought-form, as it is called, as a vehicle for communion and companionship. When we die, we shall find that we have been fully present with them all the time. We, in our turn, will similarly be surrounded by all those whom we love. Each one of us thus has our own individual heaven after death where, in perfect bliss and peace, we shall enjoy reunion with all those we have truly loved.

Reunion on Earth

This is not all, however. As I have already said, we are also certain to meet our loved ones again physically. This is a further part of the great and consoling revelation of Theosophy which teaches that, after the heaven life which usually lasts for many earth time centuries of perfect bliss, a return to earth is made. The teaching that man evolves spiritually to perfection through successive lives on earth is found, on investigation, to be literally true. The spiritual Souls of men are, indeed, repeatedly reborn in new bodies. In each life they unfold their innate powers a little more, develop added faculties, attain to deeper wisdom, greater insight, nobler love, and this process culminates in the attainment of the stature of the perfect man. [For a fuller consideration of this doctrine see *Reincarnation: Fact or Fallacy?* Geoffrey Hodson, T. P. H., Adyar.] In these continual rebirths, we who have deeply loved are sure both to meet again and to love again. Indeed, the comradeships and the affections of this life, when very strong, are almost certainly continuances or renewals of the same attachments formed in preceding lives.

The parents who provide us with our new bodies are often themselves loved ones from the past. Our brothers and sisters in the family may be linked to us by ties from previous incarnations. Our colleagues and co-workers, many of our fellow-citizens, now work with us, live near us, are happy and unhappy with us, because we have forged bonds with each other in previous lives and those past experiences have drawn us together again in the present life. If there come into our life one or more especial persons who evoke from us the deepest love, whose presence is a joy, whose absence is a loss, then we may be utterly sure that out of the past a reunion has occurred.

Love a Renewal of a Former Bond

This is the reason for the strange selectivity and the extraordinary potency of the experience called "falling in love". Though actual incidents from the past are not usually remembered - sometimes they are - the heart is moved by the reunion, recognises, greets and loves once more the loved one of long ago. Thus, the

parting caused by death which seemed so final is not really so. The decree of separation is not irrevocable. On the contrary, reunion is assured, both in heaven after death and, again and again, here on earth. One day, by virtue of these successive lives of ours and all their multifarious experiences, the purpose of human existence will be fulfilled. Evolution will bring us to "a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (*Eph.*, IV. 13), as St. Paul has beautifully described the summit of human achievement. Then, of course, the illusion of death will have been dispelled. Then parting will be no more, for we shall live in the full realisation of our immortal, spiritual nature.

CHAPTER VI

SUICIDE

The Selfless Motive

IN the preceding Chapters normal after-death conditions have been considered. Certain deviations from the normal occur in cases of suicide and sudden and premature death. At least three varieties of after-death experience follow upon suicide. When committed from unselfish motives, after the shock has passed which generally accompanies sudden death, the person settles down to the new life under the conditions previously described. There is generally no coma in these cases, and no time in which the person can become gradually readjusted to the altered conditions of life.

The Escape Motive

Those who take their lives in order to escape from unacceptable conditions may sink into unconsciousness immediately on leaving the physical body, and remain in that condition until the time of natural death. They then awaken and become subject to the appropriate laws and conditions. It is this fact of awakening when the natural term of physical life would have ended which suggests that, apart from abnormal happenings such as suicide, there is a time of natural death - fixed partly by our conduct, of course-for each one of us.

Victims of Desire

The experience of those who commit the third type of suicide is less enviable still. Gross and sensual, they have ended their physical existence in the full flush of life, driven by passion or fear. Their strong desires then keep them earth-bound. They can see the replica in subtle matter of the physical plane and live in a halfworld - between this one and the next. Driven by desires and passions which they cannot satisfy, they seek gratification by entering places of sensual indulgence on the physical plane and trying to unite their consciousness with that of the drunkard or the sensualist indulging there. In such circumstances, the physical plane people

experience intensification of their desires so that the relationship, even though they are ignorant of it, can be as harmful for them as for the earthbound souls seeking gratification through them.

Suicide, a Profound Error

To the Theosophist possessed of this knowledge, suicide is always a mistake. It temporarily solves certain problems, it is true, but it also raises new ones; for eventually, every obligation must be met, every debt paid, every pain lived through. "God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (*Gal.*, VI. 7.) It is wiser, therefore, to accept and endure the difficulties, no matter how painful they may be, than to perpetuate and intensify them by attempted evasion and the additional complication of self-murder, the karmic reaction from which may adversely affect successive incarnations.

CHAPTER VII

PURGATORY

Self Created Suffering

THE person who dies in the grip of a vice suffers severely after physical death. He is then living in his emotional body and is consequently experiencing his particular craving with an intensity unknown to him when the matter of his physical body greatly reduced or damped it down. With no means of gratifying the vice, it burns itself out in him, sometimes through acute suffering.

If there be a Hell anywhere, then it is this condition of strong and ungratifiable craving. Such a Hell differs, however, in at least four respects from the Hell of orthodox religion. Firstly, it is not a place; it is a state of consciousness, as also is Heaven. One can be in either, according to the condition of one's consciousness, wherever one's body may be. Secondly, this suffering is not imposed as a punishment after judgment by an external authority; it is self-produced, as is all suffering and all joy. Both are automatic "reapings" from preceding "sowings". Thirdly, the suffering caused by unsatisfied desire is not everlasting. Even a human father would not be so illogical and cruel as to condemn his son to perpetual punishment for a sin committed in time. On the contrary, the *postmortem* suffering resulting from an unconquered vice lasts only so long as does the energy spent in its continued indulgence. When that dies out the man is free of it, and enters into normal *post-mortem* life.

Lesson Learnt and Progress Made

The last of the differences between the reality and the orthodox Christian ideas of Hell is that such suffering is by no means a futile experience. On the contrary, it can be very fruitful; for it impresses itself upon the consciousness of the sufferer strongly enough to affect the next physical incarnation, in which he will probably be born with a repugnance to the vice which caused so much pain. It is doubtless for such reasons that the conditions immediately beyond the grave are regarded as purgatorial.

"Accidents"

[The instructed Theosophist cannot admit of accidents in the accepted meaning of the word. Every experience of man throughout the life cycle, which consists of descent to birth, birth, physical life, death and ascent or return, is self-created under the law of cause and effect. No slightest injustice to any human being is ever regarded as possible. Man is his own lawgiver, the decreer of his own physical destiny.]

Sudden death may cause a temporary shock. Catastrophe may bring panic. Knowledge of evil deeds performed on earth and the voice of conscience may torture the mind. There may be a vice unconquered, obligations unfulfilled, psychological conflicts and complexes unresolved, deep longings never gratified, and these can and do cause some temporary suffering after death. Happily help is available. Helpers receive, soothe and guide those who are in need, thereby finding in the life after death a continuance and an extension of the service which they gave, or longed to give, on earth.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOLDIER AFTER DEATH

Death in Battle

SOLDIERS who are killed sometimes undertake the task of helping new arrivals and, not unusually, at first, on behalf of their own comrades who immediately follow them. As has been said, at the moment of normal death the deceased is generally engaged in reviewing the life just closed. In sudden death, however, there is, in many cases, neither review nor restful pause. A brief instant alone separates consciousness in this world from awareness in the next.

The serviceman, who generally finds himself raised in the air, is therefore able to look down upon his deceased body and, if using one at the time, the wrecked aeroplane or vehicle. In consequence, he rapidly comprehends what has happened and realises the fundamental fact that, though his body has died, he still lives on. He finds himself more fully alive than ever, more charged with vitality and enjoying a greater freedom of life and movement than was known to him on earth. Unless something very dramatic is occurring all round him, thoughts of family and home generally bear him, thought-propelled, into the presence of those he loves - his family. He cannot help grieving for them in the pain which he knows must soon be theirs.

Invisible Helping

Like nearly all those who die and think of their loved ones still on earth, he longs to bring them the assurance that there is no death, that despite the body's passing he still lives, still loves, still visits them. Sometimes his strong thought enables someone to see him, or know intuitively that he has left his body and is present in a subtler form. Then, memory of his comrades and the habits of a soldier's life, generally, take him back to the neighbourhood of his military unit. There he meets, greets and is helped by comrades who have preceded him into the next world, sees others more recently arrived and, in his turn, may begin to help them as he has been helped.

Indeed, many members of the Forces killed in battle tend to become absorbed in the highly organised system of ministrations to wounded, dying and deceased comrades which is in full operation in all wars. This helps them greatly and whilst thus serving they grow in knowledge and in power, discovering and perceiving in operation the laws and processes of human evolution to the stature of the perfect man.

Early Rebirth, Retaining Existing Emotional and Mental Bodies

Eventually, the soldier killed in battle will either withdraw to the subtler, superphysical realms as do all who have left their bodies naturally or he may be quickly reborn, beginning physical life once more as a little child, but retaining his adult personality. The evolutionary advantages of such a quick rebirth can be considerable, and may enable him to move far more rapidly than is normal towards his spiritual goal. Added knowledge, faculty, experience and power, and the opportunity to fulfil the desires and the aspirations of the preceding life, which would normally have been delayed until the next rebirth - these are some of the advantages immediately gained when a deceased soldier accepts this special privilege of quick rebirth.

Instinctual Memory

In one interesting case amongst many known, a wartime child began, whilst very young, to march about the family garden shouldering a stick and shouting out orders to invisible troops! Nothing in the child's environment or experience in the present life could have contributed to such an instinct. Almost certainly it arose from the fact that within the child's body was a recently deceased soldier now reborn. Such quick rebirths not infrequently occur in the country, and even in the environment, from which the deceased soldier had come. Reunion and a renewal of the fond ties of the previous life are therefore by no means impossible, even though direct remembrance and recognition may usually be withheld.

Courage in Bereavement

Before I leave this aspect of our subject, let me quote a few lines from Lord Moran's recent book, *The Anatomy of Courage*. Writing of the early death which can come to soldiers, he says: "Yet it is a fine free setting forth, this end in the field. It comes to a man in the spring time, before age and disease have soiled his body and traffic of cities has stained his soul. He has lived his brief manhood among men, knowing what is best in them, and has gone but untouched and undefeated by the petty strife of a world at peace."

The following poem by Nigel Tangye, which appeared in *The Spectator*, London, during the Battle of Britain in the Second World War, exemplifies an ideal and a

courageous attitude towards all bereavement, and more especially towards the sudden loss of a loved one in battle:

“On Monday, on The Times front page, I read A notice in memoriam of the dead

From ` Pamela ', Referring briefly to the death On Thursday last of Michael
R.A.F. And beneath it was this monument of faith

'One of our pilots is safe!.'

CHAPTER IX

THE CHILD AFTER DEATH

Alternative Procedure

THE child, after death, either completes with much less awareness than the adult the normal life cycle through the emotional and mental planes back into Egohood or reincarnates quickly. In the first case, at the second death, as it is sometimes called, the emotional body is laid aside and the consciousness functions in the mental body, finding therein perfect happiness and peace. This state corresponds to some extent to the Paradise of orthodoxy. In it the child reaps, as do all who complete the cycle of birth and death, the fruits of such idealistic and spiritual aspirations as it may have been old enough to experience. The mental body is then laid aside and the consciousness that has made the pilgrimage is withdrawn into the inner Selfhood, enriched by the experiences through which it has passed.

Bereaved Parents Receive Their Child Again

Rapid reincarnation would, however, also appear to be quite general, especially in case of children dying quite young. Some debt to Nature, incurred by a transgression in a previous life, has now been paid. The way is then open for a successful re-entry into physical incarnation, with all its evolutionary advantages, the same youthful mental and emotional bodies being retained. If the mother is expectant again within two or three years, the new baby body may well be the vehicle for the Ego of the child who had died. Some mothers seem instinctively to know that the same spiritual Soul has returned to them. Many have assured me of this, and of their interest and pleasure in noting how the appearance and the natural inclinations of the new child supported that supposition. The new incarnation then continues its normal course.

Reunion Assured

Thus we see that even if our deceased children do not return to us, we have not wholly lost them; they are still with us, as are all our deceased loved ones, and are here and now and all about us, but temporarily out of our perspective. Although we do not usually see them, because of our lack of the necessary vision, they have neither finally left us nor ceased to exist. If we truly love them our immortal Selves are one with theirs for all eternity, and when we sleep we may have their personal companionship. When our time comes to enter the higher worlds we shall meet them, and in that reunion realise the unfailing unity of all who truly love.

CHAPTER X

HOW TO PREPARE FOR DEATH

The Heaven Which Awaits Us

THE gradual withdrawal from the material towards the more spiritual worlds, which normally begins at death, culminates in entry into perfect happiness and fulfilment: This state of supreme content is a heaven indeed; for in it every aspiration is fulfilled, every feeling of unselfish love is completely expressed. In the heaven to which the departed withdraw in this second phase of the life after death, all loved ones are perceived as intimately present, all truth, all beauty, all peace, all love and happiness which the deceased is capable of experiencing, heal, uplift and re-orient the Soul after its essential and fruitful sojourn on earth.

Herein, also, we perceive the precise operation of the law of cause and effect; for all experiences after death are the effects of causes set going during earth-life. Their richness is also exactly proportionate to the depth of the causative feelings, thoughts and aspirations. Everywhere, and so both here and hereafter, there is law, that law of cause and effect which ensures justice to every human being. A noble, kind, unselfish physical life is, therefore, the best preparation for the life after death.

There is Nought to Fear

What should we offer to death? Certainly, not fear, but rather a welcome, almost as if packing up for a holiday after the strenuous but essential and valuable experiences of life on earth. Someone has in fact, written concerning the near approach of death:

"The soul is packing up and just on wing,
Like parting swallows when they seek the Spring."

Can one make plans for one's life after the death of the body? Certainly one can, for, as I have just said, the law of cause and effect operates from physical to superphysical life. Each one of us, therefore, is continuously making his afterdeath conditions by his daily thoughts, motives, feelings, words and deeds. If we live nobly, beautifully and unselfishly while on earth, we ensure for ourselves a corresponding measure of happiness hereafter.

There is no Death

We have thus found that in physical death there is nought of which to be afraid. Rarely is an individual conscious of the final departure from the body. He slips

away as in sleep, tranquilly, peacefully, without pain. Death for most people is a release into a freer, happier life. Birth is not the beginning of human existence.

Death is not its end. The body alone is born at physical birth. The body alone dies at physical death. Both birth and death are oft recurring incidents in the long series of earthly lives, by means of which alone we are enabled to climb upwards to full spiritual knowledge of our true, immortal, Selves or, in other words, to Adeptship. For that true Self, there is no death. Each one of us is an immortal Son of God. Death exists only in the eye that beholds it, touching only the physical body, freedom from which releases us in large measure from the blinding power of matter. The physical body and the matter of the physical world so often hide from us the spiritual realities which are all about us and within us, just as the veil of day conceals the ever shining stars.

CHAPTER XI

THE SEVEN VESTURES OF THE SOUL

THE full, personal solution of the problem of survival consists first and foremost of personal experience of immortality, of knowing that one's essential Selfhood is independent of physical existence, is distinct from its temporary physical encasement. This experience is within the reach of those still living on earth. By purity of life and by regular daily contemplation of the inward Spirit, which is the true Self, the "living God", for which the body is a temple, that Inner Self may be discovered and its immortality known direct. As the booklist at the end of this work shows, Theosophical literature offers guidance in such reflective thinking and meditation upon the highest truths.

The more mental key to the problem of survival and the conditions after death consists of knowledge of the seven bodies of man. These are:

The physical body,
The etheric double,
The emotional or astral body,
The lower mental body; vehicle of concrete thought,
The higher mental body, vehicle of abstract thought,
The vehicle of intuition,
The vehicle of spiritual will.

The Two Diagrams

The two diagrams appearing on the next two pages partly illustrate this classification. Figure 1 shows the seven bodies of man during life, the upward pointing triangle representing the Spiritual Triad, the Immortal Self of man, and the downward pointing triangle the mortal personality. The circles in which both

triangles are enclosed refer, to the radiant aura of the Higher Self of man. [Man, Visible and Invisible, C. W. Leadbeater.]

Figure 2 depicts the changes which occur at the moment of death and shows how relatively insignificant they are. The physical body and its etheric double are separated from the rest of the deceased person, who is then endowed with only five vehicles of consciousness. The two circles representing the Egoic and the personal auras have, however, begun to coalesce, indicating the process which generally begins at death, of the gradual withdrawal into the spiritual Self of the higher attributes of the personal soul.

The Wraith

At death, then, the physical body and the etheric double, which is the container of physical vitality, are laid aside. They disintegrate almost together, the etheric double generally conforming to the shape of the physical body throughout the process. In ordinary burial this occupies a certain period of time, during which the etheric double can become separate from the physical body and float at the surface of the grave or in the air immediately above it. This is one form of the wraith or ghost of a deceased person and it can, under certain conditions, become temporarily animated and more readily visible. At cremation both the physical and the etheric bodies are rapidly destroyed.

The Second Death and the Shell

The threefold Inner Self is then clothed in the bodies of emotion and concrete thought. Using these as vehicles of consciousness with varying degrees of awareness, the Soul passes through the intermediate astral phase of the life after death. Ultimately, the emotional body is laid aside at what I, have earlier referred to as the second death, and slowly disintegrates. Under certain circumstances, it also can be temporarily animated, as by the magnetic fluid of a spiritualistic medium and circle, nature spirits, deceased persons or magicians. When thus animated, this "shell" can display some memory of physical life and some of the characteristics of the physical personality. It cannot originate ideas, however, nor does it usually communicate through mediums with an intelligence equal to that which the person possessed on earth. This discarded astral body should not be confused with the true Spirit of man, the Dweller in the Innermost, and cannot properly be referred to as "a spirit".

The Completed Cycle

When the physical body is laid aside, the centre of consciousness is withdrawn, swiftly or slowly according to the condition of the deceased, through the intermediate or astral world, gradually to become established in the mental body, the instrument of concrete thought. As earlier described, the blissful happiness of a heaven-like existence is then slowly entered upon. This, ultimately, draws to a close, the mental body is, in its turn, discarded and consciousness is then focused wholly in the *Augoeides*, the body of light, the Causal Body, the vehicle of abstract intellect. The human cycle of forthgoing and return thus completed, the process of reincarnation in a new set of mortal vehicles usually begins.

The Severance of the Lower from the Higher

In the process of the withdrawal of the centre of self-consciousness from the physical to the spiritual vehicles, there gradually occurs a separation of the spiritual attributes of the deceased personality from its lower instincts, impulses and

recollections. As previously stated, the higher qualities are drawn up into the Inner Self and the lower remnant is discarded. The Immortal Ego, the spiritual individuality, of Will, Wisdom and Abstract Intelligence, then exists in a condition of beatitude which is referred to as a heaven life or a heaven-like life and which in Hindu and Buddhist philosophy is called *Devachan*, or "the place of the Gods". The self-conscious personality of the deceased as it was on earth, with its higher feelings, aspirations, affections, and even tastes; or rather the higher essence of all these, enters *Devachan*. The more sensual feelings, desires and tendencies of the late personality cannot experience *Devachan*. They are left behind to float off into the earth's atmosphere with their vehicle, the astral body, as it disintegrates, its elements being returned to the sources from which they were originally drawn to body.

Man, Mortal and Immortal

Theosophy thus teaches that man is a septenary during life, a quintad immediately after death and later a quaternary and a triad in *Devachan*. The principle of individuality in the immortal, spiritual nature of man is centred in the vehicle of the Abstract Intellect, itself a vesture at that level of Spiritual Wisdom and Spiritual Will. Thus the inner individuality is a triad, a triune Deity endowed with the faculties of Will, Wisdom and Intelligence and this, as the ensouling principle, is connected during incarnation with the four personal bodies by means of the *Sûtrâtma* or thread of life, the "silver cord".

One Power and One Life

Despite this septenary classification of the principles or bodies of man, it should be remembered that they are all manifestations of one spiritual Entity, divine and human. After death, the purely human, terrestrial attributes and principles are discarded, whilst that portion of the divine Essence of the higher mental principle which is left unsullied survives. This, united with the spiritual Wisdom and the spiritual Will of the Ego, constitutes the Immortal Self of man, which is immune from death and evolves to Adeptship by virtue of successive lives on earth.

An Adept Teacher has described the process or the review of the physical life, which occurs at the death of the body, in these words: "At the last moment, the whole life is reflected in our memory and emerges from all the forgotten nooks and corners picture after picture, one event after the other. The dying brain dislodges memory with a strong supreme impulse, and memory restores faithfully every impression, entrusted to it during the period of the brain's activity. That impression and thought which was the strongest naturally becomes the most vivid and survives so to say all the rest which now vanish and disappear for ever, to reappear but in *Deva Chan*. No man dies insane or unconscious - as some physiologists assert. Even a *madman*, or one in a fit of *delirium tremens* will have his instant of perfect lucidity at the moment of death, though unable to say so to those present. The man

may often appear dead. Yet from the last pulsation, from and between the last throbbing of his heart and the moment when the last spark of animal heat leaves the body - the brain *thinks* and the Ego lives over in those few brief seconds his whole life over again. Speak in whispers, ye, who assist at a death bed and find yourselves in the solemn presence of Death. Especially have you to keep quiet just after Death has laid her clammy hand upon the body. Speak in whispers, I say, lest you disturb the quiet ripple of thought, and hinder the busy work of the Past casting on its reflections upon the veil of the future." (*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter XXIII, page 170.)

Madame Blavatsky describes death and these *post-mortem* processes as follows: "When the man dies, his three lower principles leave him for ever; *i.e.*, body, life, and the vehicle of the latter, the astral body [Called the etheric double in later Theosophical literature and throughout this book.] or the double of the *living* man. And then, his four principles - the central or middle principle (the animal soul or Kâma Rûpa) [Called the astral body in this book], with what it has assimilated from the lower Manas, and the higher triad find themselves in Kâma Loka. The latter is an astral *locality*, the *limbus* of scholastic theology, the *hades* of the ancients, and, strictly speaking, a *locality* only in a relative sense. It has neither a definite area nor boundary, but exists *within* subjective space, *i.e.*, is beyond our sensuous perceptions. Still it exists and it is there that the astral *eidolons* of all the beings that have lived, animals included, await their "second death". For the animals it comes with the disintegration and the entire fading out of their *astral* particles to the last. For the human *eidolon* it begins when the âtma-buddhimanâsic triad is said to "separate" itself from its lower principles, or the reflection of the ex-personality, by falling into the devachanic state. . . . Then the kâmarûpic phantom, remaining bereft of its informing, thinking principle, the higher Manas, and the lower aspect of the latter, the animal intelligence, no longer receiving light from the higher mind, and no longer having a physical brain to work through, collapses." [The Key to Theosophy, H. P. Blavatsky, page 97.]

CHAPTER XII

PHILOSOPHERS AND POETS AND THE LIFE AFTER DEATH

"BEREAVEMENT", writes Dean Inge, "Is the deepest initiation into the mysteries of human life, an initiation more searching and profound than even happy love. Love remembered and consecrated by grief belongs, more clearly than the happy intercourse of friends, to the eternal world; it has proved itself stronger than death."

Sir Thomas Browne combines the practical observation of the physician with the mystic's visionary apprehension, in his account of the mysterious beauty of death as considered by him in the case of one of his patients. With the deeper impression he received of it he still, as Pater says in *Appreciations*, surprises and moves his reader. The death being slow, he had been able to note the spiritualising of the bodily frame, and simultaneously to watch the spirit in the very t, as it were, of

changing its material vesture, a wonderful new type of grace being involved in the process. `The infinite future had invaded this life perceptibly to the senses, like the ocean felt far inland up a tidal river.' " [*The Poetry and Beauty of Death*, Rev. Arthur E. Massey.]

" Of the dead alone ", says Maeterlinck, " should portraits be painted, for it is only they who are truly themselves and who, for one instant, stand revealed as they are." And elsewhere he quotes a saying of Lavater: " Death does not only beautify our inanimate form; nay, the mere thought of death gives a more beautiful form to life itself."

" Death slew not him, but he made death his ladder to the skies."

-Spenser

I cannot say and I will not say
That he is dead. He's just away!
With a cheery smile and a wave of the hand
He's vanished into the unknown land,
And left us dreaming how fair
It needs must be since he lingers there.
And you, oh, you who so greatly yearn
For the old-time step and the glad return,
Think of him as faring on, as dear
In the love of there, as the love of here;
And the loyal still, as when he gave the blows
Of his warrior's strength to his country's foes!
Mild and gentle as he was brave,
When the sweetest love of his life he gave
To little things.
Think of him as the same I Say,

He is not dead, he is just away."

-James Whitcomb Riley

"Death itself is nothing more than a great kiss of affection ... When a human being quits this earthly life it is God who takes His child in His arms, kisses it and carries it away from earth to brighter and more blissful spheres."

R. P. Downes

"Death is a cessation from the impression of the senses, the tyranny of the passions, the errors of the mind, and the servitude of the body."

-Antoninus

Who knows if that which is called death be not life, and life mere dying? " *-Euripides*

"Death is to Life as going away is to coming. After blossoming for a while everything dies down to its own root;
This going back to one's origin is called Peace.

-An Ancient Chinese Scripture

A SOLDIER - HIS PRAYER

(This anonymous poem was written during the Second World War by one of the British Eighth Army on a scrap of paper which fluttered into the hands of another soldier sheltering in a slit trench during the battle of El Agheila, North Africa.)

"Stay with me, God. The night dark,
The night is cold; my little spark
Of courage dies. The night is long;
Be with God, and make me strong.

I love a game. I love a fight.
I hate the dark; I love the light.
I love my child; I love my wife.
I am no coward. I love Life.

Life with its change of mood and shade.
I want to live. I'm not afraid.

But me and mine are hard to part;
Oh, unknown God, lift up my heart.

You stilled the waters at Dunkirk
And saved Your Servants. All Your work
is wonderful, Dear God. You strode
before us down that dreadful road.

We were alone, and hope had fled;
We loved our country and our dead.
And could not shame them; so we stayed
The course, and were not much afraid.

Dear God, that nightmare road! And then
That sea! We got there ... we were men.
My eyes were blind, my feet were torn,
My soul sang like a bird at dawn

I knew that death is but a door.
I knew what we were fighting for:
Peace for the kids, our brothers freed,
A kinder world, a cleaner breed.

I'm but the son my mother bore,
A simple man, nothing more.
But .. God of strength and gentleness,
Be pleased to make me nothing less.

Help me, O God when Death is near
to mock the haggard face of fear,
That when I fall - if fall I must –
My soul may triumph in the Dust.”

AN ADVENTURE

What an adventure it will be to die.
When the dark sky,
Rent like the petal of an opened rose,
Parts to disclose

The Golden Heart of Beauty at its core!
What a divine adventure to explore
The Valley of the Shadow, where the roar

Of Life's red river gradually grows dumb

And darkness strangles us and we become
Sightless, and numb, Nerveless, and cold;
Feeling the dear familiar body torn
A robe outworn ...

From the unmantled spirit fold by fold!
What an adventure it will be to die,
And in a magic moment be reborn
Passing unconsciously upon a sigh
From night to morn.

To wake from sleep and find
The eyes no longer blind;
And like a sword unsheathed, and bright, and bare
The swift emancipated immortal Mind
Flashing and flaming in the ampler air.

-Robert Campbell Macfie

THERE IS NO DEATH

One said: It is Death
And I, in weakness slipping through the night, In some afright
Looked up,
And lo, no spectre grim, but just a dim sweet face
A sweet high, Mother face, alight with tenderness and grace
Thou are not Death, I cried for life's supremest fantasy
Had never thus envisaged Death to me;
Thou are not Death, the End?
In accents winning, came the answer: Friend,
There is no Death! I am the Beginning, not the End!

John Oxenham

THE SOURCE OF THEOSOPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

THE SECRET DOCTRINE is the accumulated Wisdom of the Ages, and its cosmogony alone is the most stupendous and elaborate of all systems ... the facts which have actually occupied countless generations of initiated seers and prophets to marshal, set down and explain . . . are all recorded on a few pages of geometrical signs and glyphs. The flashing gaze of those seers has penetrated into the very kernel of matter, and recorded the soul of things there, where an ordinary profane observer, however learned, would have perceived but the external work of form. . . . [The Secret Doctrine] is an uninterrupted record, covering thousands of generations of seers, whose respective experiences were made to test and verify the traditions, passed on orally by one early race to another, of the teachings of higher and exalted Beings, who watched over the childhood of Humanity... [They did this] by checking, testing, and verifying, in every department of Nature, the traditions of old, by the independent visions of great Adepts; that is to say, men who have developed and perfected their physical, mental, psychic, and spiritual organisations, to the utmost possible degree. No vision of one Adept was accepted till it was checked and confirmed by the visions-so obtained as to stand as independent evidence- of other Adepts, and by centuries of experience." [*The Secret Doctrine*, H. P. Blavatsky, Volume I, Adyar Edition, 316.]

A METHOD OF MEDITATION

Preparation

Body relaxed. Emotions harmonised.

Mind alert and charged with will.

Centre of awareness established in the Higher Self, the Spiritual Soul, the Immortal Ego.

Dissociation

Mentally affirm and realise -

I am not the Physical Body

I am the Spiritual Self.

I am not the Emotions.

I am the Spiritual Self.

I am not the Mind.

I am the Spiritual Self.

Meditation

I am the Divine Self. (Think of the Monad.)

Immortal.

Eternal.

Radiant with Spiritual Light.

I am that Self of Light, that Self am I.

The Self in me, the Atmâ [Atmâ, Sanskrit The Spirit-Essence of man.] is one with the Self in all, the Paramâtma. [Paramâtma, Sk. The Spirit Essence of the universe, its presiding Intelligence, the Solar Logos, Our Lord the Sun.]

I am that Self in all; that Self am I. The Atma and the Paramâtmâ are one.

I am THAT. THAT am I.

Closing

Bring the centre of awareness into the formal mind, illumined and responsive to the intuition. Into the emotions, irradiated by Spiritual Light. Into the body, empowered by Spiritual Will, inwardly vitalised, and Self-recollected throughout the day, remembering the Divine Presence in the heart, the Inner Ruler Immortal, seated in the hearts of all beings.

Relax the mind and permit the uplifting effect of the meditation to extend into the studies and the life of the day.

(For explanations and comments, *vide A Yoga of Light* by Geoffrey Hodson, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, India.)

THEOSOPHY AND THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

THE word *Theosophia*, derived from two Greek words meaning Divine Wisdom, was coined by the Neo-Platonists in the 2nd century of the Christian era to connote the truths revealed to man by his evolutionary Elders at the dawn of human life on this planet, and added to, checked and re-checked down to the present day by an unbroken succession of Adept [*Adept*. An Initiate of the 5th degree; a Master in the Science of Esoteric Philosophy; a perfected Man; an exalted Being who has attained mastery over the human nature and possesses knowledge and power commensurate with lofty evolutionary stature. This fulfilment of human destiny is thus described by St. Paul: " Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature

of the fulness of Christ." (*Eph.*, IV. 13) Certain Adepts remain on earth to assist humanity and are referred to by St. Paul as "just men made perfect". (*Heb.*, XII. 23) The Lord Christ similarly described the destiny of man in His words: "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (*Matt.*, V. 48, R. V.) occult investigators. The full fruits of this dual process have been preserved by the still living Hierophants and Initiates of the Greater Mysteries, in which they were imparted to pledged neophytes alone. In their doctrinal aspect, these Mysteries consist of a vast body of teaching which embraces every conceivable subject to which the mind of man can be turned.

The fundamental principles of religion, philosophy, art, science and politics are all contained within this Wisdom of the Ages. From the time of the closing of the Neo Platonic and Gnostic Schools to the last quarter of the 19th century, save for the few Alchemists, Kabalists, Rosicrucians, occultly instructed Masons and Christian mystics, Theosophy was unknown in the Western world. Before then it was known and studied in various forms by the Platonists, the Pythagoreans, the Egyptians and the Chaldeans, whilst in India and China it has been preserved down the ages in unbroken continuity. It is the wisdom of the *Upanishads* and the *Vedas*, the very heart of Hinduism, Taoism and Islam. By means of allegory and symbol it is revealed in the Christian Scriptures, the dead-letter reading of which has blinded Christians to their deeper significance.

The Theosophical Society, founded in New York in 1875, a reincarnation of innumerable similar movements in the past, is one of the many channels chosen from time to time by the Teachers of the Race for the transmission of this Ancient Wisdom to man. Theosophists are offered the opportunity of studying, living and presenting the age-old truths to the world in terms of modern thought. Though the presentations may vary, Theosophy itself, being all-Truth, is unchanging and eternal.

The study of comparative religion reveals the existence of certain doctrines which are common to all World Faiths. Although differently presented in each, when collected and blended into a whole, these teachings constitute a basic body of revealed Truth which can be studied independently of all religious systems. Each world religion reveals an arc of the circle of Eternal Wisdom. Theosophy, although, as yet but partially revealed to man, is the full circle of Truth. Age by age, at the direction of Those who are the Guardians of knowledge and its accompanying power, aspects of the Eternal Wisdom are revealed to man through world religions and philosophies.

The great practical value of Theosophy consists in its revelation of the meaning and purpose of human existence, which without it is a hopeless puzzle defying solution. A puzzle may be solved by two methods. One is that of trial and error, of experimenting with various pieces in the hope that ultimately they will fit together. This is a slow and unsatisfactory method, particularly in the attempt to solve the

problems of life. The other method, far more satisfactory, is based on preknowledge of the position of the various pieces in the complete design.

Theosophy provides that knowledge, reveals the due place in an evolutionary plan of every individual and every event.

Life somewhat resembles a piece of tapestry. On the under side one sees little save incomprehensible tangles, knots, badly blended colours and a general confusion. Examination of the upper side, however, reveals the whole pattern, shows that the confusion is only apparent, since every juxtaposition is essential to the completion of the design. So also, the apparent confusion in the lives of individuals and of Nations. Theosophy reveals the plan of life, thereby bestowing mental serenity upon those who study it and making intelligent and purposeful living possible for them.

The student of Theosophy will do well to recognise that the human mind, being finite, cannot fully comprehend abstract Truth, which is infinite. As the human intellect develops, man's power of comprehension increases. Truth appears to change, as does the shape of a mountain gradually approached and seen from different points of view. The mountain itself is, however, relatively changeless, as also is eternal Truth. Theosophy being all-Truth, no final theosophical statement is ever possible. No theosophical teacher can legitimately make authoritative pronouncements. In the Theosophical Society opinion is therefore free, save, perhaps, concerning the brotherhood of man, which tends to be regarded as a fact in Nature to be recognised rather than as a dogma to be enforced. With this exception, no theosophical utterance is binding upon another and no statement is regarded as representing final Truth.

The Theosophical Society is officially described as being "composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow it as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not to punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

"Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition."

On December 23rd, 1924, the General Council of the Theosophical Society passed the following Resolution affirming freedom of thought within the Society

"As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the civilised world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasise the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher or writer, from H. P. Blavatsky downwards, has any authority to impose his teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to attach himself to any teacher or to any school of thought which he may choose, but has no right to force his choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office, nor any voter, can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote because of any opinion he may hold, or because of membership in any school of thought to which he may belong. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties. The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise his own right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others."

Despite this complete absence of dogmatism, which should be the hallmark of all expositions of Theosophy, there does exist a general body of teaching, a synthesis of the common doctrines of world philosophies and religions, ancient and modern, which in practice is generally accepted *as long as it rings true*. Apart from the development and use of supersensory powers as a means of research, this constitutes a test which each student can apply to all the theosophical teachings *do they ring true?* If an affirmative answer is possible, they may be accepted as working hypotheses until fuller knowledge proves or disproves them. Should a statement not ring true, three courses are open to the student. He may reject, ignore, or suspend judgment until by self-training he develops the capacity to discover the facts for himself. The last of these three courses would appear to be the most desirable. Thus the attitude of mind in which Theosophy should be studied

is that of the scientist - the acceptance of a well-supported theory as a working hypothesis until it is proved, disproved or suspended.

The writings of Madame H. P. Blavatsky constitute the primary source of theosophical information in modern literature. Though branded as a charlatan by those who have neither investigated her life nor understood her literary work, this great lady is revered by tens of thousands of students of Theosophy as a lightbringer to the modern world. They believe her to have been chosen for this mission by the Sages [Vide *The Master*, A. Besant.] who have been both Guardians and Revealers of Theosophy to man throughout the ages. These Adepts used Madame Blavatsky as an amanuensis and with her aid gave Theosophy to the world in our time. Two main methods were employed. One consisted of fully conscious clairvoyance and mental telepathy in which, as a result of training under Them, she was highly skilled. The other method was that of the occult precipitation of letters written by Them, or by Their disciples at Their direction.

By the first method Madame Blavatsky produced her two great works, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* - each an almost inexhaustible fount of esoteric wisdom and knowledge. By the second method, Mr. A. P. Sinnett, at that time (1880) editor of India's leading newspaper, *The Pioneer*, obtained the material for his books, *The Occult World*, *Esoteric Buddhism* and *The Growth of the Soul*. These authors have been followed by many others, notably Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, both of whom, in addition to the receipt of direct instruction from the Sages, were trained by Them in the development of occult powers and their use as a means of research. Their subsequent contribution to human knowledge is immense.

The late. Geo. S. Arundale, C. Jinarájadása, and N. Sri Ram, past Presidents, all of whom are greatly respected theosophical leaders, teachers and authors, have also made their own valuable contributions. Mr. Jinarájadása has collected and published many of the letters of the Sages to Mr. Sinnett and others, in three volumes entitled *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, Series I and II, and *The K. H. Letters to C. W. Leadbeater*. The interested reader is referred to these various sources as the bases for most of the statements made in this book.
