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ELEMENTARY THEOSOPHY

L. W. ROGERS

LOS ANGELES
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PREFACE

To comprehend the significance of great world changes, before Time has fully done his work, is difficult. While mighty events are still in their formative period the future is obscure. But our inability to outline the future cannot blind us to the unmistakable trend of the evolutionary forces at work. One thing that is clear is that our boasted Christian civilization is the theater in which has been staged the most un-Christian war of recorded history and in which human atrocity has reached a point that leaves us vaguely groping for a rational explanation of it. Another obvious fact is that the more than twenty nations involved have been forced into measures and methods before unknown and which wholly transform the recognized function and powers of governments. With these startling facts of religious and political significance before us thoughtful people are beginning to ask if we are not upon the threshold of a complete breaking down of modern civilization and the birth of a new order of things, in which direct government by the people throughout the entire world will be coincident with the rise of a universal religion based on the brotherhood of man.

In such a time any contribution to current literature that will help to clear the ground of

misconceptions and to bring to the attention of those interested in such things, that set of fundamental natural truths known as theosophy, may perhaps be helpful. Whether or not the world is about to recast its ethical code there can at least be no doubt that it is eagerly seeking reliable evidence that we live after bodily death and that it will welcome a hypothesis of immortality that is inherently reasonable and therefore satisfies the intellect as well as the heart. Those who are dissatisfied with the old answers to the riddle of existence and demand that Faith and Reason shall walk hand in hand, may find in the following pages some explanation of the puzzling things in life—an explanation that disregards neither the intuitions of religion nor the facts of science.

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Of course no pretension is made of fully covering the ground. The book is a student's presentation of some of the phases of theosophy as he understands them. They are presented with no authority whatever, and are merely an attempt to discuss in simple language some of the fundamental truths about the human being. No claim is made to originality but it is hoped that by putting the old truths in a somewhat different way, with new illustrations and arguments, they may perhaps be seen from a new viewpoint. The intention has been to present elementary theosophy simply and clearly and in the language familiar to the ordinary newspaper reader. All technical terms and expressions have been avoided and the reader will not find a single foreign word in the book.

L. W. R.

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CHAPTER I.

THEOSOPHY

Rediscovery is one of the methods of progress. Very much that we believe to be original with us at the time of its discovery or invention proves in time to have been known to earlier civilizations. The elevator, or lift, is a very modern invention and we supposed it to be a natural development of our civilization, with its intensive characteristics, until an antiquarian startled us with the announcement that it was used in Rome over two thousand years ago; not, of course, as we use it, but for the same purpose, and involving the same principles. A half century ago our scientific men were enthusiastic over the truths of evolution that were being discovered and placed before western civilization. But as we learn more and more of the thought and intellectual life of the Orient it becomes clear that the idea of evolution permeated that part of the world centuries ago. Even the most recent and startling scientific discoveries occasionally serve to prove that what we supposed to be the fantastic beliefs of the ancients were really truths of nature that we were not yet able to comprehend! The transmutation of metals is an example. We have already gone far enough in that direction to show that the alchemists of old were not the foolish and superstitious people we supposed them to be. We have given far too little credit to past civilizations and we are coming to understand now that we have rated them too low. Our modesty must necessarily

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increase as it becomes clearer that much of our supposed contribution to the world's progress is not invention but rediscovery. We are beginning to see that it is not safe to put aside without careful examination an idea or a belief that was current in the world thousands of years ago. Like the supposed folly of the alchemists it may contain profound truths of nature that have thus far been foreign to our modes of thinking.

Theosophy is both very old and very new—very old because the principles it contains were known and taught in the oldest civilizations, and very new because it includes the latest investigations of the present day. It is sometimes said by those who desire to speak lightly of it that it is a philosophy borrowed from the Buddhists, or at least from the Orient. That is, of course, an erroneous view. It is true that the Buddhists hold some beliefs in common with theosophists. It is also true that Methodists hold some beliefs in common with Unitarians, but that does not show that Unitarianism was borrowed from Wesley! When different people study the same facts of nature they are likely to arrive at substantially the same conclusions. Theosophy is based upon certain truths of nature. Those who study those truths and formulate a belief from them must reasonably be expected to resemble theosophists in their views. Buddhism is not unique in resembling theosophy. In the same list may be placed the Vedanta philosophy, the Cabala of the Jews, the teachings of the Christian Gnostics, and the philosophy of the Stoics. The more general charge must also be denied; theosophy is not something transplanted from the Orient. It belongs to the race, as the earth does, and cannot be localized, even to a continent. As it is taught today in Europe and America it is probably unknown to the masses of the Orient, for the great general truths it embodies have here the special application and peculiar emphasis required by a totally different civilization. But that theosophical principles were earlier known and more widely accepted in the Orient is quite true. That fact can in no possible way lessen their value to us. Precisely the same thing is true of the principles of mathematics. The science of mathematics reached European civilization directly from the Arabs, but we do not foolishly decline to make use of the knowledge on that account. [11]

The literal meaning of the word theosophy is self-evident—knowledge of God. It has three aspects, determined by the different ways in which the human being acquires knowledge—through the study of concrete facts, by the study of the relationship of the individual consciousness to its source, and through the use of reasoning faculties in constructing a logical explanation of life and its purpose. In one aspect it is, therefore, a science. It deals with the tangible, with the facts and phenomena of the material scientist and makes its appeal to the evidence of the physical senses. In another aspect it is a religion. It deals with the relationship between the source of all consciousness and its multiplicity of individual expressions; with the complex relationships that arise between these personalities; with the duties and obligations which thus come into existence; with the evolution of the individual consciousness and its ultimate translation to higher spheres. In its other aspect it is a philosophy of life. It deals with man, his origin, his evolution, his destiny. It seeks to explain the universe and to throw a flood of light upon the problem of existence that will enable those who study its wisdom to go forward in their evolution rapidly, safely and comfortably, instead of blundering onward in the darkness of ignorance, reaping as they go the painful harvests of misdirected energy. [12]

While theosophy is distinctly a science and a philosophy it is not, in the same full sense, a religion. It has its distinctive religious aspect, it is true, but when we speak of a religion we usually have in mind a certain set of religious dogmas and a church that propagates them. Theosophy is a universal thing like mathematics—a body of natural truths applicable to all phases of life. It sees all religions as equally important, as peculiarly adapted to the varying civilizations in which they are found, and it presents a synthesis of the fundamental principles upon which all of them rest.

From all of this it will be seen that there is a vast difference between theosophy and theology. Theosophy declares the immortality of man but not as a religious belief. It appeals to the scientific facts in relation to the nature of consciousness. It knows no such word as "faith," as it is ordinarily used. Its faith arises from the constancy of natural law, the balance and sanity of nature, and the harmonious adjustment of the universe. Theosophy is very ancient in that it is the great fund of ancient wisdom about man and his earth, that has come down through countless centuries, reaching far back into prehistoric times. But added to that hoary wisdom are the up-to-date facts that have been acquired by its most successful students, who have evolved their consciousness to levels transcending the physical senses—facts which, however, do not derive their authority from the method of their discovery but from their inherent reasonableness. A detailed discussion of such methods of consciousness and the proper value to be placed upon such investigations rightly belongs to another chapter. It is enough now to warn the reader against the error of confusing the pronouncements of pseudo psychism with the work of the psychic scientists who have already done much toward placing a scientific foundation beneath the universal hope of immortality. [13]

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CHAPTER II.

THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

The antagonism between scientific and religious thought was the cause of the greatest controversy in the intellectual world in the nineteenth century. If the early teaching of the Christian Church had not been lost the conflict could not have arisen. The Gnostic philosophers, who were the intellect and heart of the church, had a knowledge of nature so true that it could not possibly come into collision with any fact of science. But unfortunately they were enormously outnumbered by the ignorant and the authority passed wholly into their hands. It was inevitable that misunderstanding should follow. The gross materialization of the early teaching, the superstition, the bigotry and the persecution of the Middle Ages was a perfectly natural result. That perverted, materialistic view has come down to us, and even now gives trend to the religious thought of Western civilization. Of that degradation of the early teaching the Encyclopedia Britannica says:

The conception of God as wholly external to man, a purely mechanical theory of creation, is throughout Christendom regarded as false to the teaching of the New Testament as also to Christian experience.

It is, indeed, false to the teaching of the Christ but if it is so regarded "throughout Christendom" it is only on the part of its scholars; most certainly not by the masses of the people. The popular conception is undeniably that the relationship between God and man is identical with that between an inventor and an animated machine. It is an absolutely anthropomorphic view of the Supreme Being and thinks of God as being apart from man in precisely the same sense that a father is apart from his son. It may be an exalted, idealized conception of the relationship of father and son but it is nevertheless just that relationship, and along that line runs practically all the teaching and preaching of those who speak officially in modern religious interpretation. Emerson sought to counteract that popular misconception but he was regarded as a heretic by all but an infinitesimal portion of the church. [16]

The idea of the immanence of God is as different from the popular conception as noontide is different from midnight. It is so radically different that one who accepts that ancient belief must put aside his old ideas of what man is and raise him in dignity and potential power to a level that will, at first, seem actually startling; for it means, in its uttermost significance that God and man are but two phases of the one eternal life and consciousness that constitute our universe! The idea of the immanence of God is that He *is* the universe; that the solar system is an emanation of the Supreme Being as clouds are an emanation of the sea, and that the relationship between God and man is not merely that of father and son but also that of ocean and raindrop. This conception makes man *a part of* God, having potentially within him all the attributes and powers of the Supreme Being. It is the idea that nothing exists except God and that humanity is one portion of Him, and one phase of His being, as clouds are one expression of the waters that constitute the sea. The immanence of God is a conception of the universe that puts science and religion into perfect harmony with each other because miraculous creation disappears and evolutionary creation takes its place. [17]

Although the anthropomorphic idea of God has such widespread dominion in Occidental thought the immanence of God is plainly taught and repeatedly emphasized in the Christian scriptures. "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being," is certainly very explicit and admits of no anthropomorphic interpretation. It could not be said that a son lives and moves in his father. The declaration presents the relationship of a lesser consciousness within a greater, and constituting a part of it. The essentially divine nature of man is made clear in the declaration in Genesis that he is an image of God. To say that the likeness is on the material side would, of course, be absurd. In divine essence, in latent power, in potential spirituality, man is an image of God, because he is a part of Him. The same idea is more directly put in the Psalms with the assertion, "ye are gods."^[A] If the idea of the immanence of God is sound man, as a literal fragment of the consciousness of the Supreme Being, is an embryo god, destined to ultimately evolve his latent powers into perfect expression. [18]

The oneness of life was explicitly asserted by Jesus in his teaching. Emerson's teaching of the immanence of God is unmistakable in both his prose and poetry. "There is no bar or wall," he says, "in the soul where man, the effect, ceases and God, the Cause, begins." Still more explicitly he puts it:

The realms of being to no other bow;
Not only all are Thine, but all are Thou.

The statement is as complete as it is emphatic. "Not only all are Thine, *but all are thou.*" It's an unqualified assertion that humanity is a part of God, as leaves are part of a tree—not something a tree has created in the sense that a man creates a machine but something that is an emanation of the tree, and is a living part of it. Thus only has God made man. Humanity is a growth, a development, an emanation, an evolutionary expression of the Supreme Being.

It is upon the unity of all life that theosophy bases its declaration of universal brotherhood, regarding it as a fact in nature. The immanence of God gives a scientific basis of morality. The theosophical conception is that men are separated in form but are united in the one consciousness which is the life base of the universe. Their relationship to each other is somewhat like that of the fingers to each other—they are separate individuals on the form side but they are [19]

united in the one consciousness that animates the hand. If we imagine each finger to possess a consciousness of its own, which is limited to itself and cannot pass beyond to the hand, we shall have a fair analogy of the unity and identity of interests of all living things. Under such circumstances an injury to one finger would not appear to the others as an injury to them, but if the finger consciousness could be extended to the hand the reality of the injury to all would be apparent. Likewise an injury to any human being is literally an injury to the race. The race does not recognize the truth of it just because, and only because, of the limitation of consciousness. Lowell put the fact clearly when he said:

He's true to God who's true to man;
Wherever wrong is done
To the humblest and weakest
'Neath the all-beholding sun,
That wrong is also done to us;
And they are slaves most base
Whose love of right is for themselves,
And not for all the race.

He's true to God who's true to man because they are one life; because they are but different expressions of the one eternal consciousness; because they are as inseparable as the light and warmth of the sun. It follows that being true to man is fidelity to God.

The popular idea is that people should be moral because that sort of conduct is pleasing to the Supreme Being and that He will, in the life beyond physical existence, in some way punish those who have broken the moral laws. It is belief in an external authority that threatens punishment as a deterrent to law breaking, as a state devises penalties commensurate with offenses. But the immanence of God represents a condition in which not punishments, but consequences, automatically follow all violations of natural law. Under such a state of affairs it would require no penalties, but only knowledge, to insure right conduct, for it would be perceived that there is no possible escape from the consequences of an evil act.

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It is not difficult to see the relative value of the two systems of thought when put to a practical test in human affairs. Imagine an unscrupulous man of great mental capacity who is amassing an enormous fortune through sharp practices that enable him to acquire the earnings of others while he safely keeps just within the limits of the law. We can point out to him that while he is not violating the law, and cannot therefore be prosecuted, he is nevertheless inflicting injury upon others and consequently public opinion will condemn him. But such a man usually cares nothing at all for public opinion and he sees no good reason why he should not continue in his injurious work. But if he can be made to understand that all life is one and that we are so knit together in consciousness that an injury to another must ultimately react upon the person who inflicts it; if he once clearly understands that to enslave another is to put chains upon himself, that to maim another is to strike himself, he will require neither the fear of an exterior hell nor the threat of legal penalties to induce him to follow a moral course. He would see that his own larger and true self-interest could be served only when his conduct was in harmony with the welfare of all. It is but a simple statement of the truth to say that the immanence of God furnishes a scientific basis of morality.

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FOOTNOTES:

[A] Psalms LXXXII—6.

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CHAPTER III.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOUL

If we accept the idea of the immanence of God we shall be forced to abandon belief in a miraculous instantaneous creation of man and the earth on which he exists. The old, absurd, unscientific, impossible idea that the race came from an original human pair must be replaced by the hypothesis of the evolution of the soul.

It was about the fact of evolution that the great storm of controversy raged between scientists and theologians in the middle of the nineteenth century, and later. The evolutionary truths were not at first well understood. They seemed to question or deny the existence of God. Deep within humanity is intuitive religious belief. It is a natural faith that transcends all facts, like the faith of a child in its mother. Because evolution was contrary to all preconceived ideas of the earth's inception it seemed at first to shatter faith and destroy hope, and against fact and reason itself

rose the protest of intuition with spiritual intensity. People felt more than they reasoned and cried out that science was about to destroy the belief in God. But time has proved that they had merely misinterpreted the meaning of evolution. Further understanding has shown that, instead of destroying the belief in God, evolution has given us a new and better understanding of the whole matter and has placed the hope of immortality on firmer ground than it previously occupied.

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Evolution is an established and generally accepted fact. No educated person now thinks of questioning it. It is settled beyond dispute that all things in the physical world have become what they are through a long, slow, gradual evolution and that organisms the most perfect in form and most complex in function have evolved from simpler ones. The age of miracle has passed and belief in miracle has passed so far as its relation to the material world is concerned. It is no longer necessary to have a belief in an anthropomorphic God, performing feats in defiance of natural law, in order to account for that which exists. Science has reduced the cosmos to comprehension and shown that, given nebulous physical matter, we can understand how the earth came into existence.

But why should we stop with the application of the laws of evolution to material things? Only the outright materialist, who asserts that life is a product of matter, can logically do so, and so great an authority in the scientific world as Sir Oliver Lodge has asserted that there is no longer any such thing as scientific materialism.^[B] Those who accept the idea of the existence of the soul at all must necessarily accept the idea of the evolution of the soul. How can consciousness possibly escape the laws that evolve the media for the expression of consciousness? There must be the evolution of mind as certainly as there is evolution of matter. The material and the spiritual, form and life, are inseparable. Indeed, scientific progress has now brought us to the point where matter, as such, practically disappears and we are face to face with the fact that matter is really but a manifestation of force. How, then, is it longer possible to speak of the soul and not accept the evolution of the soul? Psychology is no less a science than physiology. The phenomena of consciousness are as definitely studied as physical phenomena, and it is no more difficult to account for a myriad souls than to account for a million suns and their planets. The scientists who have taken the position that the universe has a spiritual side as well as a material side are among the most eminent and distinguished of the modern world. If evolution has produced the starry heavens from the material side it has likewise evolved the human souls of our world and others from the spiritual side. It is no more difficult to understand the one than the other.

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From the scientific viewpoint the old popular belief in the creation of the earth and the race by an act suddenly accomplished is, of course, preposterous. If we could know nothing back of the present moment and were called upon to account for the world as we see it—with its cities, its ships and railways, its cultivated fields and parks—many people who still believe in instantaneous creation of the soul would save themselves much mental exertion by declaring that God had made it all as it stands for the use and entertainment of man. But we know that it is utterly absurd to think of the world leaping into existence instantaneously—nothing existing one day and all trains running on time between ready-made cities the next, carrying ready-made people about. It sounds ridiculous only because we are putting it in material terms, but in very truth it is less ludicrous than thinking of the instantaneous creation of the creators of cities and railways.

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The idea that we are a sudden creation is only possible because of the very vague ideas of what human souls are. The chief difficulty with the popular notion that a human soul is as new as the body it inhabits is that it is a vague and indefinite conception of life, and the moment we begin to think seriously about it the weakness of the idea becomes apparent. Such a notion has no relationship to the processes of reasoning. How can one reason with a man who believes it possible for a soul to spring into existence from the void? What is the use in reasoning about the "whys and wherefores" when it settles the whole matter to say: "God did it"?

One thing that prevents us from believing not only that millions of souls were created in the twinkling of an eye, but also that the world as it now is was likewise suddenly created, is that we happen to know quite definitely the history of the world a little way into the past, and that history affirms that the earth and all life on it is the product of slow evolutionary growth.

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The evolution of the soul places the realm of religion on a scientific basis. Not only the origin of the soul but its development and its destiny at once appear in a new light. The mind is instinctively impressed with the dignity of the idea of the evolution of the soul, which, with its corollary, the immanence of God, makes the divinity of man a fact in nature.

FOOTNOTES:

[B] Raymond: or Life and Death.

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CHAPTER IV.

LIFE AFTER BODILY DEATH

One of the really remarkable facts of modern life is the disinclination to accept at apparent value the scientific and other evidence there is to prove that consciousness persists after the death of the physical body. There is in existence a large amount of such evidence and much of it is offered by scientists of the highest standing; and yet the average man continues to speak of the subject as though nothing about it had yet been definitely learned. It is the tendency of the human mind to adjust itself very slowly to the truth, as it is discovered. Sometimes a generation passes away between the discovery and the general acceptance of a great truth. When we recall the intense opposition to the introduction of steam-driven boats and vehicles, and the slowness with which the world settles down to any radical change in its methods of thinking, it will perhaps seem less remarkable that the truth about the life after bodily death has waited so long for general recognition.

The evidence upon which a belief in the continuity of consciousness is based is of two kinds—that furnished by physical science and that furnished by psychic science. Together they make a very complete case.

The printed evidence of the first division—physical science—is voluminous. In addition to that gathered by the Society for Psychical Research there are the researches and experiments by the scientists of England, France and Italy, among whom are Crookes, Lodge, Flammarion and Lombroso. Crookes was a pioneer in the work of studying the human consciousness and tracing its activities beyond the change called death. All of that keenness of intellect and great scientific knowledge, which has enabled him to make so many valuable discoveries and inventions, and has won for him world-wide fame, were brought to bear upon the subject, and for a period of four years he patiently investigated and experimented. Many illustrated articles prepared by him, fully describing his work, were published at the time in *The Journal of Science* of which he was then the editor. [30]

Three vital points in psychic research were established by Sir William Crookes. One was that there is psychic force. He demonstrated its existence by levitation. He showed next, that the force is directed by intelligence. By various clever experiments he obtained most conclusive evidence of that fact. He then demonstrated that the intelligence directing the force is not that of living people. Crookes also went exhaustively into the subject of materialization and here, again, he was remarkably successful. He was the first scientist to photograph the materialized human form and engage in direct conversation with the person who thus returned from the mysterious life beyond. This evidence from the camera must be regarded as particularly interesting. It was received with much amazement at the time, but that was before we had revised our erroneous ideas about the nature of matter and before the day of liquid air. Materialization is no longer a startling idea, for that is precisely what liquid air is—a condensation of invisible matter to the point where it becomes tangible and can be weighed, measured, seen and otherwise known to the physical senses. [31]

All these things Sir William Crookes did upon his own premises and under the most rigid scientific conditions. All the methods and mechanism known to modern science were employed and he finally announced his complete satisfaction and acceptance of the genuineness of the phenomena observed.

As Sir William Crookes was the earliest, Sir Oliver Lodge is the latest of the famous scientists who have taken up the investigation of the continuity of consciousness. In a lecture upon the subject, before the Society for the Advancement of Science, he declared not only that the subject of life after physical death was one which science might legitimately and profitably investigate but that the existence of an invisible realm had been established. He declared the continent of an invisible world had been discovered, and added, "already a band of daring investigators have landed on its treacherous but promising shores."

Different scientists make a specialty of certain kinds of psychic investigation and while Crookes made a detailed and careful study of materialization Lodge has given equally painstaking efforts to investigations by the use of that class of sensitives known as "mediums." A medium is not necessarily a clairvoyant, and usually is not clairvoyant. A person in whose body the etheric matter easily separates from the physical matter is a medium and can readily be utilized as a sort of telephone between the visible and the invisible planes. A medium is an abnormal person and is a good medium in proportion to the degree of abnormality. If the etheric matter of the body is easily extruded the physical body readily falls into the trance condition and the mechanism of conversation can be operated by the so-called "dead" person who has temporarily taken possession of it. In such cases it is not the medium who speaks for the living-dead communicator. He is speaking directly himself, but he may often do it with great difficulty and not always succeed in accurately expressing the thought he has in mind. He may have to contend with other thoughts, moods and emotions than his own and to those who understand something of his difficulties it is not strange that such communications are frequently unsatisfactory. It is not often that an analogy can be found that will give a physical plane comprehension of a superphysical condition, but perhaps a faint understanding may be had by thinking of a "party [32]

line" telephone that any one of a dozen people may use at any moment he can succeed in getting possession of it. A listener attempting to communicate with one of them may find that several others are constantly "switching in," much to his confusion. If distinction of voices due to sound were eliminated and then a stenographic record were to be made of all words reaching the listener he would find that it would often be fragmentary and trivial. That would not, however, prove that the conversation did not come from living beings nor that there was not at least one intelligent person among them. That scientists engaged in psychic research have similar experiences proves nothing more.

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It seems to be a common opinion that the evidential value of such psychic communications, even under the direction of a skilful scientist, cannot be very great. But there are ways of knowing. It is not at all difficult for the investigator to confine his work, not only to incidents unknown to the medium, but to scientific facts which the medium can not possibly comprehend. It is a matter of common knowledge that mediums are usually people without technical scientific knowledge. Some of them have some degree of education and some of them are illiterate. Some of the most celebrated belong to the peasant class of Europe.

Let us suppose that Sir Oliver Lodge is about to attempt to communicate with a scientist who has passed on to join the living dead. He will ask technical scientific questions that nobody but a scientist can answer and that the medium can by no possibility even understand when they are answered. Or suppose he gets a communication from the medium's hand signed by a great author. The living dead man writes a criticism, let us say, of some new book and does it in his characteristic style, full of the power of keen analysis and sound literary judgment. Surely nobody can believe that the medium is producing such things on her own account. If she could do so she would not be earning her living as a medium. But the scientists do not stop there. We often hear the expression "cross-correspondence." Just what do they mean by that and in what way does it prove the personal identity of a dead man who is communicating? The principle may be illustrated by the hotel clerk's method. Sometimes a guest leaves a sum of money with the clerk, and he wishes to be perfectly sure of his identity when he returns to claim it. He requests the guest to put his signature on a card. Then he tears the card in two, gives him one piece and keeps the other. That gives him a double proof of identity. When he comes for his money he must first give his name and then produce the piece of card that fits into the ragged edge of the piece the clerk has retained, the two together making the whole and restoring the signature. It's one of the simplest but most satisfactory proofs possible. Neither piece of that card alone is intelligible. If one piece should be lost and others should find it nobody could read it or make anything of it. Nobody could guess the name unless he had the other piece. He knows only about the part he holds. He may be a thief and may earnestly desire to use what he has found to defraud, but he is helpless because he has only one of the two parts it requires to make an intelligible whole. That is the principle involved in identity by cross-correspondence. Part of a message is written through one medium and part through another medium at another time in another place and neither part presents a complete statement or has coherence until it is fitted into the other part; and that prevents a medium who is dishonest from manufacturing a story that may be more or less plausible.

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We are by no means wholly dependent upon scientific investigation for evidence that the dead still live. Hundreds of people are sufficiently sensitive to have some personal knowledge of the matter. The number is far beyond what it appears to be for two reasons. One is that the average person fears ridicule and keeps his own counsel about his occult experience. The other is the feeling that communications from departed relatives are too sacred and personal for public discussion. Tens of thousands of people have seen demonstrations at spiritualistic seances which, while possessing little evidential value from the scientific viewpoint, nevertheless have a legitimate place in the great mass of psychic phenomena. But more convincing is the evidence furnished in hundreds of homes where some member of the family acts as automatic writer or medium.

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The most convincing evidence is not always scientific evidence. What can be more convincing than the evidence furnished in one's home by members of the family? There is much such evidence, obtained both through mediums and by automatic writing.

Automatic writing—that is, the control of the hand of a living person to record the thoughts of another who has lost the physical body—is perhaps one of the least objectionable ways in which communications have come from the astral world, and to it we are indebted for some useful books with interesting accounts of the life in the unseen regions. Here, of course, as elsewhere, discrimination must be used, for the wise and foolish, the useful and useless are to be found side by side. In accepting or rejecting, one must use his common sense just as he does on this plane in separating the valuable from the worthless. In such matters we should not lose sight of the fact that the living dead are unchanged in intellect and morality. The genius here is the genius there and the living fool is not different from the dead one. It is often those who know the least who are the most anxious to tell it and the medium or automatic writer sometimes gives them the opportunity. Consequently we get many foolish communications and an enormous amount of commonplace platitude is delivered at seances. But it is equally true that unquestionable proof of personal identity is sometimes secured.

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There is much valuable non-scientific evidence that the consciousness survives the loss of the physical body and it frequently comes from sources that insure respectful attention. The two following stories of that kind are cited as corroboration of the scientific evidence.

Little touches of the personality often constitute the most convincing of all evidence. It is one thing to show that people in general live after physical death. It is quite a different matter to establish the personal identity of one of them who is communicating, and that is one of the vital points involved. W. J. Stillman, the eminent journalist, gives us some valuable evidence on personal identity. In his earlier years he had studied art in London. Shortly before the death of Turner, the great artist had volunteered to give Stillman some advice on painting, but had not redeemed the promise at the time of passing away. Stillman had a friend whose daughter was mediumistic and he decided to experiment. Immediately on beginning the seance the young girl was taken possession of by an entity claiming to be Turner. Stillman asked his question silently, speaking no words, but mentally requesting Turner to write his name. The only reply was an emphatic shake of the head. He then asked if he would give some advice on painting. The response was another decided negative. Stillman felt that he was foolishly wasting his time and declared the seance at an end. But the girl sat silent. Then after a moment she slowly arose with the air of decrepitude, took a lithograph from the wall and went through the pantomime of stretching a sheet of paper on a drawing board, sharpening a pencil, tracing the outline, the washing-in of a drawing, etc., and then proceeded to show a simple but surprising method of taking out the lights. "Do you mean to say that Turner got his effects in that way?" asked the incredulous young artist. The answer was an emphatic affirmative. Stillman then asked if the central passage of sunlight and shadow through rain in the well known drawing "Llanthony Abbey" by Turner, had been done in that way and was answered by another emphatic affirmative. So sure was the young artist that this could not be true that he gave it up in disgust and abruptly left. A few weeks later Stillman was calling upon Ruskin and related the experience. Ruskin, who had known the celebrated dead artist intimately, declared that the contrariness of the medium at the beginning of the seance was remarkably characteristic of Turner. But what was much more to the point, in the way of evidence, was that the drawing in question was in Ruskin's possession and eagerly it was brought down from the wall for examination. After close scrutiny the great art critic and the young artist agreed that, beyond dispute, the drawing *had* been done in the way described.

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Such evidence has an added value when it comes from those who are neither spiritualists nor professional investigators, but who have the things they doubt thrust upon them in such convincing manner that they feel impelled to record their experience for the enlightenment of others. In the last literary work^[C] done by Carl Schurz, we are given, quite incidentally, his testimony that at a seance soon after the Civil War he was told the future in such detail as to leave no possible room for the explanation of coincidence. It was in July, 1865, when Schurz was on his way to Washington, whither he had been summoned by President Johnson, that he stopped in Philadelphia at the home of his friend, Dr. Tiedemann. The doctor's daughter, about fifteen years old, could do automatic writing. As a matter of interest and amusement in the family circle the girl gave an exhibition of her psychic abilities. When Schurz was invited to ask for a communication he not unnaturally requested one from the recently deceased President Lincoln, for he had been personally acquainted with him. The girl wrote a message purporting to come from Lincoln. It related to politics and proved, in time, to have been an accurate prophecy of most unexpected facts which would not transpire for more than three years! Schurz lived in Wisconsin at the time and had no intention of changing his residence, nor did he do so until two years later. The message which the girl wrote asserted that Schurz would be elected to the United States senate *from Missouri*. He did not regard the message as authentic and naturally enough considered the prophecy absurd. In 1867 he took up his residence in St. Louis and in January, 1869, he was elected United States senator by the Missouri legislature.

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So far as the scientific evidence is concerned, it will be understood, of course, that no attempt is here made to present that. The intention is merely to call attention to some of the eminent scientists who have done notable work and to mention a few of the more interesting discoveries made. Those who desire to come into possession of the evidence in full will find upon examination that it is voluminous.

From the viewpoint of physical science alone the evidence of the continuity of consciousness is not only convincing but conclusive. Yet occult science has much more to offer. To those who have no personal knowledge of the existence of occult faculties, such evidence can be offered only upon the inherent reasonableness of the statements made.

The truth of clairvoyance, like all other truths, must slowly win its way to general acceptance. While large numbers of people still scoff at it, even as the world not so very long ago scoffed at hypnotism as a fantastic theory with no foundation in fact, there is nevertheless a large and rapidly growing number who personally know the truth about clairvoyance. There is every conceivable grade of clairvoyant power and some degree of superphysical sensitiveness is becoming rather common.

There are two distinct kinds of clairvoyance and that which is most in evidence with the public is not calculated to inspire confidence. It is employed almost exclusively in what is known as "fortune telling" and is often practiced by those who are interested only in the money they can earn by it. As a matter of course, trickery and fraud are found associated with it among such people, and those amongst them who are both capable and honest suffer on account of it.

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The fortune telling clairvoyant is usually one who was born with "second sight," as the Scotch have named it, and almost without an exception they do not in the least understand its rationale. They find certain facts in their consciousness that could not be known to them by the physical senses, but why or how they get the information they do not know. That form of clairvoyance is a

sensitiveness related to the sympathetic nervous system, the center of which is the solar plexus. It has no relationship whatever to the mind, no association with intelligence, and will often—indeed, commonly—be possessed by the most ignorant and uncouth. It is much more common among Indians and negroes than among more highly evolved people. It is vestigial and will slowly disappear from the race. It belongs to the realm of emotion, not thought.

The higher clairvoyance, the only true "clear seeing," is associated with the cerebro-spinal nervous system and its seat is in the brain. It is not a "natural gift"^[D] like the other, although it is latent in all human beings. It has been highly developed in some who have had the unusual opportunity of long training under the direct supervision of great psychic scientists. Such clairvoyants are never to be found among the fortune tellers. Only people with serious views of life and intense devotion to human service would have the patience and endurance to undergo such training and only those of singular purity of life would have any possibility of success. Such clairvoyants are people of keen intelligence. By special training and tremendous effort, not possible to most of us, they have pressed forward in evolution and attained a development that the race will be many a century in reaching.

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It is by the use of this exalted order of clairvoyance that invisible realms are explored, and additional knowledge is accumulated to the ancient wisdom. Such a clairvoyant is not a medium. The medium surrenders his physical mechanism for the use of another, who speaks through it, and at the close of the seance the medium knows nothing of what has occurred. The clairvoyant is always in possession of his senses and is fully aware of what is occurring. He is the explorer and discoverer. He deals with the facts of the life after bodily death in a different way than the physical scientist does but it is soon found by the student that the physical scientist and the psychic scientist corroborate each other. Together they bring overwhelming evidence to support the hypothesis that life is eternal; that the consciousness we have at this moment will never cease to be; that our individuality, with all its present memories, will eternally persist; that what we call death is in reality but a forward step in an orderly evolutionary journey and an entrance upon a more joyous phase of life, which is not remarkably different from that we live today. The sum total of the knowledge that we have gained through the combined work of the physical scientists and the occult scientists leads us to the conclusion that the death of the physical body means neither the annihilation of consciousness nor a radical change in consciousness. It is, in fact, but the release of consciousness from its confinement to the physical form, as a song-bird is released from a cage to the joyous freedom of a wider world, where woods and stream and field and sky give new impulse to its innate characteristics.

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FOOTNOTES:

[C] Reminiscences of Carl Schurz, Vol. III, p. 154.

[D] There are, of course, really no natural gifts. Nature does not favor some and ignore others. When a few possess what others do not have, they earned it by giving special attention to its development or as in the case of the psychic sensitiveness of the sympathetic nervous system, it is vestigial, and has been possessed by the race in earlier ages.

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CHAPTER V.

THE EVOLUTIONARY FIELD

In a treatise on elementary theosophy the solar system may be reckoned as our universe and we shall have no need of considering more than a small fragment of even that. It is septenary in constitution, as may be seen in its vibrations expressed in color and sound. Beyond the seven colors of the prism we have only tints and outside the seven notes we can get only overtones or undertones. There are likewise seven planes in the system but less than half of them require our attention, for the evolutionary field of the human soul is the three lower planes, known as the physical, astral and mental. When the human being has outgrown them in evolution he passes on to superhuman evolution.

The word "plane," so often encountered in theosophical literature, should perhaps have some definition. It has a wide application and is used as a synonym for region, place, sphere or world. In referring to the physical plane the term embraces all we know of earth and sky and life through the physical senses.

There are seven planes in our solar system because of the seven different combinations of its ultimate atoms. Each plane consists of a totally different grade of matter than the next plane, but all have for their base the ultimate atom of the solar system. When modern science discovered, to its astonishment, that the physical atom was a composite body it confirmed the theosophical

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teaching that the ultimate physical atom was *not* the final point of division. Theosophy teaches that when the ultimate physical atom is disintegrated its particles become the coarsest matter of the next plane or region above it—the astral plane. The process repeated with astral matter results in driving its ultimate atom from the highest level of the astral plane or world to the lowest of the mental plane. That scientist who said that the atom is the brick of the universe stated a great truth, for of its combinations all forms are built; and if the idea be applied to the ultimate atom of the solar system it will then be true that of such "bricks" all the planes are built.

The relationship of the planes to each other is that of interpenetrating spheres of matter. The physical plane, consisting of the earth and its atmosphere, is surrounded and interpenetrated by the astral plane, or world, which is an enormously larger globe of exceedingly tenuous matter. This vast sphere of invisible matter is *within* the earth as well as beyond it, interpenetrating every atom of physical matter to the earth's center. Its grossest grade of matter is so rare, and its vibrations so intense, that they cannot affect the physical senses and therefore we remain unconscious of it while that matter moves freely through all physical objects. We are unconscious of its life and activities for precisely the same reason that we know nothing of the messages of intelligence carried on the vibrations of the wireless telegraph, although they pass through the room where we sit. We have no sense organs with which it is possible to register such vibrations. Messages conveying intelligence of tremendous import, involving the movements of vast armies, the fall of empires and the destinies of great nations, flow through the very space we occupy but we are wholly unconscious of them. Even so we remain blind and deaf to the stupendous activities of life and consciousness in the astral world, notwithstanding the fact that it surrounds and permeates us while its forms, unseen and unfelt, move through the physical world as freely as water flows through a sieve.

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The mental world constitutes a region of our earth still more vast than the astral portion of it. As the astral sphere encloses the physical globe, the mental encompasses both, enclosing them and also interpenetrating them to the earth's center. The term "mental world" may seem confusing to some because we are accustomed to think of the mental and the material as being opposites. The mental world, or sphere, or plane, of theosophy, is a world of *matter*, not merely thought. It is matter, however, of such remarkable tenuity that it may properly be called mind-stuff, and in its rarest levels it is said to be "formless" so far as the existence of what the physical senses know as form is concerned.

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All three of these worlds, or planes—the physical, astral and mental—are, then, worlds of matter, of form, of activity, of thought and of enterprise. They are concentric globes, the physical enclosed by the astral, and both physical and astral enclosed by the mental. Within and without all physical matter are both astral and mental matter. Every physical atom is surrounded and permeated by astral and mental matter. The relationship is precisely that which exists between the ether and the lower grades of physical matter.

If the relationship of the three worlds—physical, astral and mental—is fully understood later confusion of thought will be avoided. Physical language is not capable of fully expressing much with which students of the occult must deal. Because there is nothing better for the purpose, words must be used that express but a part of the truth and may sometimes prove misleading unless the constitution and relationship of the three spheres is kept in mind. Thus, it is necessary to speak of higher and lower worlds, or planes, inner or outer, and of the soul coming "down" into the material world when, as a matter of fact, *no movement in space* is under consideration. The astral is commonly spoken of as an inner plane and while it truly is so because it can be known only to astral senses by a withdrawal of the consciousness from its exterior, material body, it is also true that the astral world is outside the physical because it envelops it as the sea does a sponge. We usually speak of coming down from higher planes to lower and that may be true not only in the sense of changing the state of consciousness from higher vibrations to lower ones but it *could* mean a journey in space from a point in the astral plane above the physical globe to a point at its surface. "Up" and "down" are relative, not absolute. "Down" for us is toward the earth's center and "up" is the opposite direction. A spire in the Occident and a spire in the Orient are both said to be pointing upward but they are pointing in opposite directions. On most parts of the earth's surface we have four directions, while at the poles there is, of course, but one direction—south or north, as the case may be. East, west and north disappear at the north pole. Reflection upon such facts leads one to at least faintly comprehend the possibility of space itself disappearing from the inner planes—space as we know it.

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The matter of each of the planes consists of seven classes. We are familiar with the solids, liquids and gases of the physical plane, and to them must be added four grades of the ether. The seven grades of matter of the astral and mental worlds constitute an important part of the mechanism for the soul's evolution, for they determine the state of consciousness in the life beyond the physical plane. But a study of those states of consciousness belongs to a later chapter.

A difficulty which the student of theosophy should make an early effort to eliminate, is the tendency to think of invisible realms as unreal. It should not be forgotten that it is only the limitation of the physical senses that gives rise to the feeling of unreality beyond the visible. We should keep in mind the fact that the invisible realms are composed of matter as certainly as the air is matter, or a stone is matter. The water in a pan may evaporate, but it does not cease to be matter because it has passed beyond the ken of the physical senses. It will some time condense once more and play its part as the liquid, water, or as the solid, ice. Only when matter is in certain forms can we know of its existence through the physical senses.

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We frequently hear people who are students of the occult speak of a deceased person as having left the earth. But passing into the astral plane, or world, is not, of course, leaving the earth. Both the astral world and the mental world are divisions of the earth. As the atmosphere is invisible and yet is a part of the earth's physical matter, so the invisible astral and mental regions are other parts of the earth. They are properly called worlds because the activities in consciousness that make up existence there are as remote from ours as though they were upon another planet. We have erroneously supposed that with the physical senses we really see and know the earth, whereas we have known only that small fragment of the earth that consists of physical matter. Beyond the limitation of our poor senses stretch in unsuspected grandeur vaster regions of our earth, swept by the vibrations of an intenser life.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE MECHANISM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The soul is a center of consciousness within the all-consciousness, or the life of the solar Logos; an individualized portion of the universal mind. That fragment of the divine life, with its latent God-like attributes, is expressed through a mechanism of consciousness that is formed of the matter of the various planes. Naturally enough it is expressed more fully upon the higher planes than upon the lower. At a very high level it is known as the monad. When it reaches down into the higher subdivisions of the mental world it is the ego, a lesser expression of the same divine life that pours from the Logos through the monad—lesser because it is then functioning through the denser matter of a lower level.

The knowledge that has been gained about the nature of matter in recent years is helpful in understanding the activities of consciousness. The atom is found to be a center of force, and we are at the point where matter, as we have known it, disappears. All the force and consciousness of the solar system is, of course, but the life of the Logos, and on higher planes the distinctions we observe here fade out. Matter becomes a very different thing from the matter we know. The ether of the physical world is almost inconceivably tenuous matter. Yet it is gross when compared to the lowest grade of astral matter. The matter of the mental world is enormously rarer than the most tenuous matter of the astral world. In view of these facts it requires no stress of the imagination to understand that the matter of the higher planes is responsive to the vibrations of consciousness.

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The outraying energies of the individualized center of consciousness act upon the matter of the plane and draw about it a film that slowly grows into a vehicle through which consciousness can be more fully expressed, and which serves as a point of vantage from which its expression can be extended to lower planes.

The seven subdivisions of the mental world fall naturally into two groups, composed of the three higher and the four lower grades of matter. The ego, anchored in the matter of the two planes above the mental world, descends to the upper levels of the mental and the vesture of matter with which it clothes itself is known as the causal body. Sending its energies downward, or outward, to the lower levels of the mental world, it establishes itself there in what slowly becomes a mental body. Again in the astral world the process is repeated and a vehicle of consciousness is formed of astral matter. The physical body is the lowest and last of the vehicles to be formed and as it is slowly built, in the months preceding birth, the matter it contains falls into place under the operation of occult laws which permit no element of chance to enter into its construction.

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Each of these bodies serves as a vehicle of consciousness on the plane to which it belongs. The soul is evolving simultaneously in each of the worlds, physical, astral and mental, and these various bodies enable it to receive the vibrations of the plane they belong to and thus to be conscious there. The mental body is the seat of intellectual activity. Thought arises as a vibration in it and passes through the astral body into the physical brain. Whenever we think we are using the mental body. The astral body is the seat of emotion. With it we feel. All emotion passes from it to the physical body to be expressed in the material world. The astral world is also called the emotional world, as the mental plane is called the mental world. The physical body is the soul's instrument of action. It attaches it to the physical world, enables the consciousness to contact material objects and to move and express on the material plane the thoughts and emotions generated in the mental and astral bodies.

Another part of the mechanism of consciousness is known as the etheric double. But it is only a link in the chain and not a body through which the soul can function. It is composed of the etheric matter of the physical world and connects the astral body with the physical body. As every atom of physical matter is surrounded and permeated by etheric matter, it follows that the physical body has its duplicate in etheric matter. "Etheric double" is a very appropriate name since it is a perfect duplicate of the physical body in etheric matter. It serves the purpose of supplying the life force to the nervous system and is the medium through which sensation is conveyed. The action

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of an anaesthetic drives out so much of the matter of the etheric double that the connection is broken and sensation in the physical body ceases.

One of the difficulties in the way of getting a clear conception of the constitution of man, and realizing that he is a soul functioning through various vehicles of consciousness, is the materialistic modes of thought common to Occidental civilization. We are accustomed to thinking of the physical body itself as being the man, and if there is any thought at all of the consciousness surviving the death of the body it is very vague and indefinite as to where it exists and how it is expressed. Very little thinking should be necessary to show the absurdity of the belief that the body is the man. Two bodies may be alike, as in the case of twins, but the souls, the real men, may be absolutely unlike. The real man is superphysical. His intelligence or his stupidity, his genial disposition or his moroseness, his generosity or his selfishness, are but the manifestations of himself through the body by which they are expressed. The body itself is a mere aggregation of physical atoms, as a planet is, so organized that they constitute an instrument for a purpose. The mass of matter constituting the body is a variable mass. It may increase or diminish greatly, but the man remains unchanged. There is no permanent relationship between the man and the physical matter which he uses for his vehicle of consciousness. According to the physiologists every atom of the body changes within a period of a few years. The cells wear out, break down and pass away to be replaced by new matter. Not a particle of the physical matter that was in our bodies seven years ago is there now, and none that is there now will remain. Within seven years, or less, we shall have bodies composed of new matter as certainly as an infant's is.

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Of course such reconstruction of the body does not change its appearance. It is built on the same lines. It is as it would be with some very old cathedral. As the centuries pass it must be slowly rebuilt. The floors wear out and are relaid. The roof serves its time and is replaced. The walls crumble first in one place and then another until they have been completely reconstructed. After a thousand years has passed there may be none of the original material in the building, yet its appearance is unchanged. The bodies we have today shall have passed away and will be growing in the trees and blooming in the flowers in a few years. The bodies we shall then have are now scattered through the world. They will be brought together during that time and will come from many parts of the earth.

The physical senses continually deceive us and nowhere more than in our ideas about the physical body. It is an unstable mass of matter, in constant motion, with great gulfs of space between its atoms. Emerson was very far ahead of his time and it took science a half century to catch up with him and learn that he had recorded a fact in nature when he wrote:

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Atom from atom yawns as far
As earth from moon, or star from star.

In 1908 the *Scientific American Supplement*, commenting on our reconstructed ideas about matter, remarked that the actual mass of the physical body to the apparent mass was about one to one million!

If the physical body is merely an organized mass of matter, continually varying, constantly coming and going, and having no permanent relationship to the consciousness that functions through it, what reason is there for believing that it is the man? Does it seem strange that the center of consciousness should be able to draw about itself on the higher planes aggregations of matter and finally to express itself on the material plane through the mass of matter we call the body? If that is mysterious quite as miraculous things are going on constantly about us unnoticed. Thoreau calls attention to the fact that we become so accustomed to the marvelous expressions of life all about us that we are oblivious of the phenomena that are taking place. Commenting on the magic possible to nature he says:

"Though I do not believe that a plant will spring up where no seed has been, I have great faith in a seed—a, to me, equally mysterious origin for it. Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders.... In the spring of 1857 I planted six seeds sent to me from the Patent Office, and labeled, I think, 'Poitrine jaune grosse,' large yellow squash. Two came up, and one bore a squash which weighed 123½ pounds, the other bore four, weighing together 186¼ pounds. Who would have believed that there was 310 pounds of poitrine jaune grosse in that corner of my garden? These seeds were the bait I used to catch it, my ferrets which I sent into its burrow, my brace of terriers which unearthed it.... Other seeds I have which will find other things in that corner of my garden. Perfect alchemists I keep who can transmute substances without end, and thus the corner of my garden is an inexhaustible treasure-chest. Here you can dig, not gold, but the value which gold merely represents; and there is no Signor Blitz about it. Yet farmer's sons will stare by the hour to see a juggler draw ribbons from his throat, though he tells them it is all deception. Surely, men love darkness rather than light."^[E]

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A seed is a center of force through which life, at a much lower level than the human, flows and gathers about that center the material mass that serves the purpose of its lowly evolution. At the human level consciousness has become self-consciousness and a marvelously complex mechanism is required to express it and serve the purpose of its farther evolution.

This complex mechanism of consciousness, composed of the various bodies through which the ego expresses itself at different levels, is used as a whole for functioning on the physical plane. But when the ego is functioning no farther down than the astral plane, the physical body is, of course, temporarily discarded. It is then in the condition known as sleep, or trance. Sleep is the

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natural withdrawing of the consciousness from the physical body. When the separation occurs in the case of the medium it is called a trance. The cause of the inert condition of the physical body is the same in both cases—the withdrawal of the consciousness of the ego. The physical body is then unoccupied, but the consciousness maintains magnetic connection with it. In death that tie is severed and the consciousness can return to the body no more. Instances in which the apparently dead are brought back to life are cases where the magnetic tie is not broken, notwithstanding there is every appearance of death.

In form and feature the physical body has its exact duplicate in the astral body, and in it we function in the astral world whenever the separation between the two occurs, whether from sleep or death. In sleep the consciousness, expressing itself in the astral body in the astral world, may be turned dreamily inward or it may be turned outward and be vividly aware of the life and activities of that world. But there is small chance that any memory of it will come through into the physical consciousness upon awakening. Occasionally, however, it does occur and then it is usually remembered as a very vivid dream. In illness, and other abnormal conditions, the connection between the physical and astral consciousness is much closer. At a comparatively high point in evolution the two states of consciousness merge. The man is then continuously conscious, and has a full memory in the physical brain of all his activities in the astral world during the hours when the physical body was asleep.

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Consciousness is, of course, at its worst when expressed through the limitation of its lower vehicles. Any person, whether brilliant or stupid, will be much abler and keener on the astral plane than on the physical, because in sleep, and after death, he has lost the limitations imposed by physical matter. But the degree of restriction is variable and depends much upon the *kind* of matter of which the brain and body are composed; for the physical atoms vary greatly, and as they come and go in the passing years the body may either become purified and refined or it may grow grosser and coarser. By careful attention to food and drink, and by control of the emotions, the limitations of physical matter may be lessened and a much higher and more efficient state of consciousness in the physical body can be attained.

FOOTNOTES:

[E] The Succession of Forest Trees.—Thoreau.

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CHAPTER VII.

DEATH

Perhaps one of the reasons why death is so commonly associated with a feeling of fear is because we give so little thought to it. Most people seem never to think of the subject at all until death invades the home and threatens some member of the family. Then terror fills the mind and all but paralyzes the reasoning faculties.

Such fear of death, so widespread in Occidental civilization, is eloquent testimony to the materialism of our times. It is doubt about the future that causes fear of death. Only when we have a scientific basis for the hope of immortality will the awful fear of death disappear. It is feared because it seems like annihilation. If people really believed in a heavenly existence beyond the physical life they could not possibly be filled with terror at the prospect of entering it. If a man's religion has not given him a genuine confidence in a future life, and made it as much of a reality to him as this life is, it has failed to do what we have a right to demand of religion. If it does not enable him to look upon the face of his dead without a doubt, or a fear, there is something wrong, either with his religion or with his comprehension of it. What possible reason is there for fearing death? A thing that is universal, that comes to all, can not be pernicious. To regard death as a disastrous thing would be an indictment of the sanity of nature.

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Death is merely the close of a particular cycle of experience. It is the annihilation of nothing but the physical body, in its aspect of an instrument of activity and a vehicle of the consciousness upon the physical plane. The atoms of the body, drawn together in the human form for temporary use, are, in death, released from the cohesive force of a living organism and will return whence they came.

In reality there is no such thing as death, unless it be strictly applied to the form, regarded as a temporary vehicle of consciousness. As for the consciousness, there is no death. There is life in a physical form and life out of it, but no such thing as the death, or cessation, of the individual intelligence. What we name "death" is but a change in the orderly evolution of life, and it is only because the phenomenon is viewed from the physical plane that such a term can be applied to it.

From this plane it is death, or departure. But looked at from the astral world it is birth, or arrival. What we call birth is the beginning of the expression of the soul through a material body on the physical plane. It is an arrival. But from the astral viewpoint it is a departure and therefore is as logically a "death" there as departure from a physical body is here. So death and departure from one plane is simply birth, or arrival, upon another, although it is not, of course, birth as we know it.

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Every process in nature has a part to play in evolution and therefore death is as necessary as life and as beneficial as birth. Death is the destroyer of the useless. There is a time when each human being should die—that is to say, a time when the physical body has fulfilled its mission and completely accomplished the purpose for which it exists. To continue life in a physical body beyond that point is to waste energy and lose time in the evolutionary journey. Under the action of what we call "diseases" the body becomes inefficient, or through the gradual breaking down of old age the senses grow dim and uncertain. The consciousness can no longer be keenly expressed through its impaired machine and it is decidedly to the advantage of the ego to withdraw from it. The soul is in the position of an artisan obliged to work with broken and rusted tools. Good results are no longer possible. It is then that death comes, beneficently destroying the worn out instrument and releasing the consciousness from its too-often painful situation and permitting its escape into a field of unobstructed activity.

Death is painless. The breaking down of the body under the ravages of disease may cause pain, but that belongs to physical life, not death. Distress may also be caused by groundless fear of death. But the dying person who does not know that death is upon him has no terror, and no pain, and sinks quietly to sleep. Very little observation will convince one that the distress about a death-bed is invariably on the part of surviving friends, not on the part of the dying. Those who are left behind remain within the limitations of the physical senses, and they are therefore separated from the so-called dead man, but he is not separated from them. It is because of that separation that the terror of death exists for them.

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But in that very fact is to be seen the great evolutionary value of death. The separation it causes intensifies love as nothing else could do. It is only when our friend is gone that we begin to appreciate his real value and comprehend how large a part he really played in our existence. As sudden silence gives the consciousness a keener realization of the sound that has just ceased, so death, by its contrast, gives a vivid, realistic touch to life. We all know how enormously the heart qualities are quickened by the death of a close friend. The whole nature is in some degree purified and spiritualized. Selfishness is decreased and compassion expands. Sympathy for others in distress is born, and thus a decided evolutionary advance is made. We have only to reflect upon the fact that separation without death produces the same effects in a minor key, to realize the evolutionary value of death. In constant association we grow careless and indifferent. But an absence of a month or two enables one to get a truer perspective of personal associations and thereafter life has new zest. A child regards its mother with a certain degree of appreciation but a short absence enormously increases its appreciation. All human beings come into closer and more sympathetic association after a period of separation, and the completeness of the separation caused by death renders it peculiarly efficacious in the development of the spiritual side of one's nature. It often requires death to turn attention away from materialistic life. Frequently a family becomes completely absorbed in material success. There is no thought at all given to the higher life. Wealth, position, power, fame, all the vanities of the world, hold them firmly. They become completely self-centered. Then suddenly death enters and breaks the family circle, and the transient character of all they had been so strenuously striving for suddenly dawns upon them, and attention is turned to the nobler things of life. It is a well known fact that great wars are accompanied or followed with widespread spiritual awakening, and it is no doubt largely because the shadow of death has fallen on tens of thousands of households.

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It has sometimes been asked by doubtful critics if it would not be an improvement on nature's plan if the sorrow caused by the death of our friends were softened by direct knowledge of their continued existence. It is evidently the plan of nature to have the physical life and the astral life normally separated at our present level of evolution. Some of the reasons have already been discussed. There are undoubtedly others that we are incapable of understanding, and still others that we can readily comprehend. If the higher, joyous life of the astral world were open to our consciousness, then concentration upon the duties of this life would be difficult, if not impossible. Our life in the physical body may be compared to the tasks of children in school. They have serious business before them in the acquiring of knowledge and the development of the intellect. They can best accomplish the work when completely isolated from other phases of life. Introduce into their work-day consciousness the joys of a child's existence, the circus, the military parade, the picnic and the dancing parties, and the purpose for which the school exists would be defeated. To exactly the extent that the consciousness is withdrawn from such things will desirable progress be made with the work of the school-room. And so it is with the limitation of our physical senses. It serves a purpose.

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But there is a point in human evolution where such limitation of the senses is no longer of any service and may be transcended. Some people have attained it. They are those who have previously been referred to as the psychic scientists, with the higher clairvoyance of the cerebro-spinal system developed. It is an accomplishment to which all may aspire. None need submit to the separation commonly caused by death. By hard work in co-operating with nature's methods of evolution and by a serious and sustained effort to live the highest and most helpful life of which one is capable, it is possible in time to attain a level of consciousness where one has personal

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knowledge that the dead still live. But in the very work of rising to that level, the concentration previously enforced by the limitation of the physical senses will have been acquired.

One of the common delusions about death is that some radical change in the nature of a person then takes place. This is no doubt due in part to the theological ideas that have come down to us from the time of the Middle Ages. It is popularly supposed that at death one comes to some sort of a judgment that classes him as either a saint qualified for eternal bliss or a fiend fit only for endless torture! The belief is based on that erroneous view of human nature that was common to the melodrama of a past generation and that will possibly have eternal life in the cheap novel. It represented the hero as unqualifiedly good and the villain as absolutely bad. The one had no flaw of character and the other had not a redeeming feature. But human nature does not thus express itself. The spark of divine life is in all, notwithstanding it is sometimes darkly hidden. On the other hand we find no perfected beings. The perfect heroes were merely creations of an imperfect imagination. At our halfway stage of evolution we find neither the absolutely good nor the hopelessly bad.

Why should the change we call death transform a human being? It is merely the loss of one part of the mechanism of consciousness. The soul, the thinker, has lost connection with the physical world because the physical body has ceased to exist. The mental body and the astral body remain and they enable him to think and feel. But he can not think more than he knows, nor feel what he has not evolved. All that has happened in death is that contact with the material world has been lost. [66]

One of the misconceptions is that death brings great wisdom, and we often hear of people getting into communication with those who have passed on, with the hope of obtaining valuable advice. It is true that death ushers one into a realm of wider consciousness and that in the astral world one can see a little further ahead and take a few more things into consideration. But—and it is a vital point—he would have no better judgment in determining a course of action than he had while here in the physical world.

Both mentally and emotionally he is unchanged. His grade of morality is neither better nor worse. His tolerance or narrowness remains what it previously was. If he was bigoted while here he is still bigoted there. If he was the unevolved ignoramus here he remains precisely that in the astral world. Whether genius or fool, saint or villain, he remains unchanged and goes on with his evolutionary development, but in a world where emotion is the determining factor.

Death merely opens the door to a new and wider realm where the evolution of the soul proceeds. It would be difficult to say which is the greater misfortune—the delusions that make death the king of terrors, or the complacent belief that if death does not end all, it at least brings the soul to a judgment that ends all personal responsibility and settles one's fate forever. Death can no more lessen responsibility or transform the moral nature than sleep can change character or determine destiny. [67]

The theosophical conception of death is as consoling as it is scientific. Instead of the fear of death it gives us knowledge of continued life. Instead of doubt and despair it gives us confidence and joy, for it guarantees the companionship once more of those we have known and loved, and erroneously supposed we have lost. [68]

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE ASTRAL WORLD

When the physical body dies there is an interval between the loss of consciousness here and the dawning of the astral consciousness. During that interim a review of the life scenes takes place. Everything between birth and death passes again through the consciousness, as it thus pauses in the etheric double, between the life activities of two worlds. Then peaceful unconsciousness follows, from which the man awakes in the astral world.

To those accustomed to thinking of the dying as passing to some remote heaven, where they become angels, it will perhaps sound startling to say that a dead man is not aware at first that the change we call death has taken place. Yet that is a common experience. Nor is it at all remarkable that it should be so with many. We have only to recall the fact that all physical matter is surrounded and permeated with astral matter to realize that the physical plane is duplicated in astral matter. Not only the physical body of the human being but, of course, every physical object, has its astral duplicate. The dying man loses consciousness of the physical plane and awakes as from a sleep to the astral consciousness. He sees then the exact duplicate, in astral matter, of the familiar scenes he has left behind. He sees, too, his friends, for their astral bodies are replicas of their physical forms. [70]

And yet, notwithstanding all this there is a difference, though not a difference that enables him

to comprehend what has occurred. He may know that only yesterday, or what seems to him to have been yesterday, he was ill and confined to his bed, and was perhaps told that he was about to die; and now he is not ill; indeed, he never felt so free from aches and pains in all his life. The pulsing energies and exhilaration of youth are his again! This mystifies him. He sees his friends and naturally speaks to them, but gets no reply and finds that he can not attract their attention. It must be remembered that he can not see their physical bodies any more than they can see his astral body. Yet he truly sees them. If a so-called dead man and a living person look at the same instant at another living person they will both see him, but the latter sees the physical body while the former sees the astral body that surrounds and permeates it.

Under these circumstances it is not strange that the new arrival in the astral world is seized with a feeling of baffling mystery. He is in full possession of his reasoning faculties, and will power, but there is a puzzling limitation to his efforts to produce expected results. A partial analogy may be found in the case of a person suddenly stricken with aphasia over night. He rises in the morning, dresses, and goes about his accustomed duties without the slightest suspicion that any change has come to him until he takes up the morning paper and discovers that he can not read—that the familiar print simply means nothing to him!

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Of course, in time the living dead man gets adjusted to the new life. He soon meets others in the astral world who have been there longer and they, sooner or later, succeed in convincing him that he is not having an exceptionally vivid dream.

The astral world, as explained in a previous chapter, has seven subdivisions and the astral body contains matter belonging to each of them. While we have the physical body the matter of the astral body is in rapid circulation, every grade of it being constantly represented at the surface. But when the connection with the material plane is broken, a rearrangement of the matter of the astral body automatically takes place (unless it is prevented by an exercise of will power) and the grossest grade of matter thereafter occupies its surface. Consequently the consciousness of the man is limited to that subdivision of the astral world represented by the lowest grade of matter which his astral body contains at the time of his death. This is a fact the importance of which it would be difficult to over emphasize, because his after-death state of consciousness, his joy or sorrow—in short, his temporary heaven or hell, depends upon his location in the astral world.

There are three, and only three modes of death, or release from the physical body—by old age, by disease, or by violence. Old age is the natural and desirable close of the chapter of physical plane experience. It is most desirable to live to ripe old age and accumulate a large harvest of experience. To live long and actively is excellent fortune. It is not well to pass into the astral world with strong physical desires. As old age comes on the desire forces subside. Most of that grade of astral matter that is capable of expressing them has slowly disappeared. Old age represents the most gradual loosening of the life forces from the material plane, and that has many advantages.

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Release from the physical body by disease is next in order of desirability. It is a quicker and less complete breaking down of the connection with the physical world. Nevertheless it is a condition in which much progress may be made in getting free from physical desires, as those who have had experience with invalids are aware. Desires usually grow weaker with the progress of the disease that finally ends in death.

Release from the physical form by violence is, of course, the least desirable of the three, not merely because it is violence, but for the much more important reason that sudden death finds the man, as a rule, with a considerable amount of the lower grades of astral matter in his astral body.

Whether the death by violence is the result of accident, murder, suicide or legal execution, the astral plane conditions of consciousness are alike unfortunate, in that it is sudden death, not the manner of death, that permits entry upon the astral life before the lower grades of astral matter have been eliminated from the astral body. This is one reason why suicide is unfortunate—because it ushers the man into the astral world with more of the matter of the lower levels in his astral vehicle than would be there if he had lived out his normal physical life.

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Purgatory is a term often applied to the lowest level of the astral world. The word is well chosen because it is there that the moral nature is purged of its impurities. Strong desires cultivated and indulged during the life in the physical body are eliminated with the gross astral matter through which alone they can be expressed and, freed to that extent, the man passes to the next subdivision, and into its higher state of consciousness.

In the astral life some people linger long on the lower levels while others know them not at all, but awaken to the blissful consciousness of the higher subdivisions. Nature is everywhere consistent, grouping together people of a kind. It is, however, the manner in which one lives during physical life that determines his happiness or sorrow after death. The astral body, the seat of the emotions, is, like the physical body, constantly changing the matter that composes it. An emotion of any kind expresses itself as a vibration in the matter of the astral body. If it is a base emotion, such as anger, hatred, lust or cruelty, it throws into vibration the grossest of the astral body's matter, for only in that can it be expressed. If it is an exalted emotion, such as love, sympathy, devotion, courage or benevolence, it affects only the rarer grades of astral matter, for in them only can such feeling be expressed.

With most people there is a constant mingling of a wide range of emotions, with a gain in one

direction and a loss in another. One who fortunately understands the law of emotional cause and effect may make absolutely certain of a comfortable sojourn upon the astral plane after death. He would make it a rule to watch his emotions and control them, knowing that each time he indulged a gross one the vibration set up in his astral body would strengthen and vivify the grossest grade of matter in it, while pure and exalted emotions would strengthen the higher grades. Ultimately, the grossest grade, becoming atrophied for the lack of activity, would drop away from him.

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The descriptions of purgatory given by the psychic scientists are calculated to induce even the reckless to avoid it. If we could bring together all the vilest men and women now living on the physical plane, the crudest of murderers, the most besotted drunkards, the vilest degenerates, the most conscienceless and vindictive fiends of every description, and huddle them together in hovels reeking with filth, and let them remain without any outward government, free to prey upon each other, we should perhaps have a faint comprehension of the reality of the lowest subdivision of the astral world. But no physical plane comparison can do it full justice, for we must remember that it is the emotional world and that the feelings of its inhabitants make its atmosphere in a way that would here be impossible. Astral matter instantly and exactly reproduces emotion, so that the fiend or the sensualist looks exactly what he feels. Even in the unresponsive physical matter, the evil in a man is often sufficiently expressed to fill those who behold him with terror. In the astral world every cruel thought and hideous emotion would express itself in visible form and the multitudinous emotions welling up in the lower level of the astral world would be as a loathsome swarm of reptiles gliding through its horrible life. Add to all that the fact that the hopeless despair of its denizens gives an atmosphere of utter gloom and desolation, and we have a hell that leaves no need of other torture to check the course of the erring soul. And yet there is no suffering that is not self-imposed. It is both consistent and just that a man should associate with his kind and look upon himself in others until he grows sick of his own vileness and cries out in agony of spirit against his own moral offenses. It must not be assumed that every person dying with considerable matter belonging to the lower astral level still within his emotional body will necessarily pass through such experiences. It should never be forgotten that we are dealing with a matter of the utmost complexity and that even the most exhaustive description in print would present only a fragment of the truth. The conditions of consciousness on any subplane vary as individuals vary. Some people on the lowest astral level are wholly unconscious of their surroundings. Another variation is that some people find themselves floating in darkness and largely cut off from others—a sufficiently undesirable condition, and yet better than the fate of some. All states of astral consciousness are reactions from previous good or evil conduct and are, moreover, temporary conditions that will in time be left behind.

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In a different way and at a higher level there may be suffering on the astral plane that is purifying the nature. Not all offenses against nature's laws are of so gross a type. There is the abuse of desire and the violation of conscience that may result in various kinds of regret and emotional distress. A desire of a refined type strongly built up upon the physical plane lives with an intenser vitality on the astral plane after the physical body can no longer gratify it. A glutton and a miser have strong desires of a very different type. Each of them is likely to suffer on account of it during the astral life. They need not dwell upon the lowest level to get a reaction from their folly in the physical life. We can easily imagine the distress of the glutton in a world without food. There could be no distress because of hunger, for the astral body is not, like the physical body, renewed and maintained by what it consumes. But hunger and the gratification of the sense of taste are very different things. It is the latter that would trouble the gormand, and it is said that great suffering, as in the case of the drunkard, is his lot until the desire gradually disappears because of the impossibility of its gratification.

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The miser represents a subtler form of desire, but his greed for gold may be quite as intense as that of the glutton for sensual gratification. The accumulation of money has been the dominant thought of his life. He has created in his mind a wholly false value for money and it gives him real pain to part with a dollar of it. Only dire necessity forces him to spend any portion of his hoard. It is not difficult to imagine his emotions when he is obliged to leave it behind and see others spend it freely.

Any kind of a desire that is related to the physical body is without means of gratification in the astral world and if such desire has been cultivated until it becomes strong enough to play an important part in one's life it will certainly give him more or less trouble after the loss of the physical body. Whether it grows out of an over-refinement and excess in a natural appetite, as in the case of the epicure, or is simply an artificial thing that is unrelated to any natural demand, as in the case of the smoker, the inability to gratify the desire is equally distressing. The suffering that results could hardly be judged by what would follow on the physical plane when desire is thwarted, for in the astral life emotion expresses itself much more intensely.

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All of the suffering in the astral world, of whatever type, is the natural result of the thoughts, emotions and acts during the life on the physical plane. The astral world is that part of the mechanism for man's evolution that brings him up with a sharp turn when he is moving in the wrong direction. He is not being punished. The injurious forces he has generated are simply reacting upon him. This reaction, that sets him right, is as certain as in the case of the infant that picks up a live coal. It is merely less direct, and not so immediate in result, and it works itself out in a multiplicity of ways. One of the methods of reaction that helps to stamp out a fault is the automatic repetition of the unpleasant consequences of wrong doing. The murderer will serve for a general illustration. In the case of a deliberate, premeditated and cruel murder, the assassin is

moved by such base motives as revenge or jealousy. The results of these, so far as their frightful consequences to the victim are concerned, do not in the least tend to deter the assassin from further deeds of violence. He feels gratified with his success and is quite satisfied with himself. Only the possibility of detection and punishment troubles him. If they follow in due course they will accomplish something in correcting his erroneous views of life. But they will not be sufficient to register indelibly, in the very nature of the man, a proper sense of the horror of which he has been guilty. Such a man can be impressed and his viewpoint changed only by consequences to himself. It is in the reaction in the astral life of the forces he has generated here that he gets the lesson that forces in upon his consciousness the horror inseparable from murder. If he escapes the physical plane consequences of his deed he will nevertheless come into contact in the astral world with conditions sufficiently horrible. He has made a tie with his victim that can not be broken until the scales of justice are balanced and nature's exaction has been paid to the uttermost. Just what form of retribution will follow depends, of course, on the nature of the case. But the reaction is as certain as it is multiplex. One of its variants is the gruesome experience of always fleeing from the corpse of the victim, but with the utter impossibility of a moment's escape. In the case of a murderer who has been apprehended, tried, condemned and executed, the whole of the tragedy and its sequel would be, not only lived over in imagination but repeated automatically, in fact, and worked out in full detail in the plastic matter of the astral region. Probably few people have the imagination to comprehend what the murderer feels of apprehension and fear at his trial when his life is in the balance; or what he suffers while hiding from justice and making futile efforts to escape the pursuing officers of the law; or what his emotions are as his hands are tied and he steps upon the death trap. All this is reproduced in the astral life, repeatedly. As one whose mind is completely filled with a subject—let us say something that is the cause of much anxiety—finds it impossible to turn his attention from it and think of other things, or go to sleep, and is impelled against his desire to think the matter over and over, so the assassin is enmeshed in the emotion web of his crime and can not escape from living and acting it all over and over again until a revulsion of feeling arouses him to full comprehension of the horror of his crime.

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Again it should be said that no attempt is here made to give more than a very fragmentary description, and a few hints, of the manner in which the retributory laws of nature work. A writer on the subject should also be careful that, in pointing out the fact that to certain classes of offenders against nature's laws severe penalties accrue, the reader does not get the impression that suffering is the common lot in the astral life. The truth of the matter is that people who live clean, moderate lives, and refrain from generating forces that are injurious to others, will know nothing whatever of the unfortunate side of astral existence. In the limitations, the vexations, the physical aches and ills, the poverty, sorrow and suffering of the material plane, most of us are as near to hell-conditions of existence as we ever will be. The ordinary man of average morality has so little of the matter of the lowest level of the astral plane lingering in him that as a rule he would begin his postmortem existence on the next higher subdivision, which is the counterpart of the earth's surface. He would therefore have no knowledge of the hell that exists on the lower level. But that is not at all true of those who live grossly and freely indulge the emotions of anger, jealousy, hatred, revenge, and their kindred impulses, that often lead to violent crimes. It is possible to live the physical life so sanely, usefully, harmoniously and unselfishly that at the death of the physical body one will pass almost immediately to a joyous and useful career in the astral world. But while that is quite possible the unfortunate fact is that a great many people so color all their emotions with selfishness that the astral sojourn is unpleasantly affected by it. It is the emotions that determine the astral life and it is said that if they are directly selfish they bring the man into conditions on the astral plane that are very unpleasant.

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It must be expected that any idea we may form of the astral life will be incomplete, and inadequate to give a true conception what it is really like. Perhaps the most comprehensible of the subplanes is that which reproduces the physical landscape in astral matter. There the average man will begin his conscious astral career. If we think of the world as we know it here and then imagine all that is material to have vanished from it we shall gain some comprehension of the situation. Eliminate the necessity of providing food, clothing and shelter and nearly all of the labor of the race would cease. The tilling of the soil, the mining, the building, the manufacturing, and the transportation and exchange of the products of field and factory, constitute nearly the whole of human activity. In the astral life no food is required and one is clothed with astral matter from which garments are fashioned almost with the ease and rapidity of thought. No houses are needed for shelter. The astral body is not susceptible to degrees of heat and cold, and nothing there corresponds to our temperatures. There is no division of night and day, objects being self-luminous and light being perpetual.

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If we could drop out of physical life all need of physical labor, abolish all response to heat or cold, the need of food and houses, and add unlimited wealth or, to be more exact, give each person the power to possess all that wealth can confer and much that it can not, we would have an approach to a conception of the astral world from one viewpoint. Each one entering the astral life has, of course, a fullness of liberty and freedom from responsibility that is not instantly comprehensible to the physical mind. There is nothing whatever that he must do. There is, however, plenty that he can do if he desires to be active. On the physical plane many people of wealth travel and amuse themselves with sight seeing. Thousands of others would do so if it were possible. In the astral world it is possible and large numbers of people drift aimlessly about with no particular plans. Multitudes belonging to various religious sects organize themselves into congregations, build edifices and spend much time in religious services. Others amuse themselves building houses and constructing landscapes. It is not at all necessary, but the old

habits live and influence activities.

The average person in the astral world gives himself to idleness and the enjoyment of the intensified emotions of the astral life just as the majority of people would do here if it were possible to escape the round of duties so sternly imposed by their necessities. For a long time the most of them also make daily visits to the homes they have left behind on the physical plane. Those who have a strong tie of affection with some member of the family frequently spend much time lingering around and going on little journeys about the premises or elsewhere with the loved one. They understand that the dead person is not perceived by the living one, but nevertheless they desire to be near. They do not have a full consciousness of all the living person is thinking and doing, but they are fully aware of the state of feeling, or emotion, and whether the living friend is pleasantly or unpleasantly affected by passing events.

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As the astral life becomes more and more familiar to the newly arrived individual he gets well settled in it and gradually readjusts his viewpoint to a truer perspective than he has here. As time passes he is less and less in touch with the affairs of the physical life and finally loses consciousness of them altogether as he passes on to the higher levels of the astral world.

But there are many people who have a more serious view of life and who lose no opportunity of acquiring knowledge, and the astral world, which is called "the hall of learning" by students of the occult, presents remarkably good conditions to them. Here we are limited in three dimensions of matter and hampered by the very narrow range of the physical senses. In the astral world matter has four dimensions and new and marvelous avenues of learning open before the student. Those who are at all interested in music, or art of any kind, find both the field and the facilities enormously extended. Those who study nature, whether by directly probing into her secrets or by cleverly combining her principles into new processes and inventions, have such opportunities as scientist and discoverer has not dreamed of on this plane. And so for all the thoughtful and studious there is a life of the most useful and fascinating kind in the astral world.

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But it must not be supposed that the opportunity of usefulness and progress is only for the studious. There as here the opportunity for useful work in helping humanity forward is boundless; for while poverty and disease have disappeared absolutely there is much philanthropic work of other kinds to be done. People are to be taught, for there, as here, the majority are sadly in need of knowledge of how to take advantage of nature's laws for our rapid progress, and how to live in harmony with them in order to get the greatest happiness from life. But the work to be done is by no means confined to teaching. The ignorance that makes the teaching so necessary has brought a great many people into the unfortunate condition, where immediate assistance is most urgently needed, and there is such a variety of helplessness that nobody need be idle.

Because of the false teaching upon the subject of life hereafter, people are bewildered when they become conscious in the astral life. Many have had their minds so vividly impressed with the awful fate that awaits those who are not "saved" before death that they fall into a state of terror when at last they realize that death has really occurred. Others, who may or may not be haunted with any such absurd misconceptions, cling so tenaciously to the physical life when about to leave it that there is not complete separation between the etheric double and astral body. The result is that the unfortunate person finds himself cut off from the physical world and yet not arrived in the astral! Wrapped in a cloud of etheric matter he drifts for a time in terror of the unknown. Those among the so-called dead who are kindly enough to rescue the distressed may come to their relief and give valuable assistance.

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Perhaps the commonest thing that engages the attention of the astral worker is the fear that death brings to most people. They arrive in the astral world with the feeling that everything is unknown and uncertain. All preconceived ideas about the life after death have suddenly been found unreliable and they are afraid of, they know not what. They want to cling to anybody who knows something of the new world. When we remember that people are arriving in the astral world by the tens of thousands daily, even under normal conditions, it is evident that all who wish to be of service can find plenty to do. No special knowledge of the astral plane is necessary. Common sense is a sufficient equipment, in such simple work, for those who desire to be useful instead of giving the entire time to the pleasures of that world. The work for the astral helpers ranges upward in complexity, of course, and there is profitable activity for those with the fullest knowledge and skill. They usually work in well organized groups and render service of great practical value.

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Life on the astral plane has its end for the same reason that it comes to a close on the physical plane. Nature's purpose has been accomplished and the man is ready to go on farther in his evolution. The length of the astral life varies just as it does in the physical world. Some physical lives are very long and sometimes only when five scores of years, or more, have passed does the ego withdraw. Other lives are very short and scarcely well begun when they unexpectedly come to a close. There is nevertheless a general average to be found. It is at least possible to make averages for different classes of people and to say that a majority of those who are of ordinary health and strength are likely to attain a stated age, while it is certain that the majority of those who have such, and such, a physical handicap will lose their physical bodies when they are much younger. Such general rules may also be applied to the astral life.

Here a long and alert life is most desirable because the purpose of the physical plane is to gather experience that shall be transmuted into wisdom on a higher plane. It is a seed time against a later harvest. But the astral plane is, for the vast majority of the race, related to the

purgative process. In that life the errors of the physical life are largely worked out and desires that have grown up like weeds in a garden are rooted out and the budding virtues are given a chance to grow. It is a corrective plane, where blunders are checked up and the moral perspective is re-established. Naturally enough the sooner that can be done the better. The rule of a long life being most desirable on the physical plane is, therefore, reversed on the astral plane. It is the shortest life in the astral world that is the greatest prize, and it comes to those who have lived the purest and noblest lives while here. The sooner a man gets through the astral world and begins the reaping of his harvest on the mental plane, or heaven world, the better it is for him.

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The length of the astral sojourn depends primarily upon the durability of the astral body and that, in turn, depends upon the kind of a life he has lived here. Let us suppose that he has lived a very gross and sensual life. All of the emotions of that type that he indulged built more gross matter in his astral body and also strengthened and vivified the lowest grade of matter that was already there. Let us also imagine that he had an ungovernable temper and frequently gave way to outbursts of fury; further, that he was cruel and revengeful, seeking and finding many opportunities of inflicting injuries upon others. Here we have a case for long life on the lower levels of the astral world.

Let us now consider a different type of man. He lives peacefully and harmoniously with those about him. He feels strong affection for wife and children. He has a host of friends because of his cheerful, helpful and sympathetic attitude toward others. He lives cleanly and thinks nobly. His mind is kept free from trivialities and his tongue is never employed in gossip. He makes a determined and persistent effort to eliminate pride, envy and ambition. He cultivates the habit of thinking first of the welfare of others and always last of himself—in short, tries hard to eliminate selfishness and see all things impersonally. Such a man could know nothing whatever of the disagreeable part of the astral life and would pass quickly through even the higher subdivisions and reach the ecstatic happiness of the heaven world.

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From the lower subdivisions a man rises very gradually to the higher. He remains on a given level so long as is required to eliminate the matter of that level from his astral body. He is then immediately conscious on the next higher level. The grosser matter falls away because the man has at last stopped sending his life force through it. Ungratified desire has finally worn itself out and he is free. The process can be greatly hastened or retarded by the man's attitude toward life. If he foolishly dwells upon his desires, he gives new vitality and prolonged life to them. If he can resolutely turn his mind to higher things he hastens his release. His fate is in his own hands, and he is fortunate indeed if he has a knowledge of such matters.

One who dies in advanced years will pass more rapidly through the astral world than he would have done had he died in the full strength of manhood. As the years accumulate the emotions that vivify the lowest grades of astral matter are not so much in evidence and the matter in which they are expressed loses its vitality. That is an additional reason why it is desirable to live to old age in the physical world.

The hold that the material world has upon the mind is one of the causes which greatly prolong existence in the astral world. Some people give their time and thought so exclusively to material things that after they lose the physical body they cannot keep the mind away from the life that lies behind them. This difficulty does not necessarily arise wholly from having given one's energies entirely to personal ambition and material accumulation. Sometimes the ruler of a country is so determined to still manage affairs, as far as possible, that this vivid interest in the physical world stretches out the period of astral life most unfortunately.

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Ordinarily one's sojourn in the astral world is comparatively short, if we measure it in the terms of physical life. A person who has lived here seventy years may have thirty or forty years on the astral plane. But that will depend not only upon how he lived the physical life just closed but also upon his general position in human evolution. A savage of low type would have a comparatively long astral life while a man at the higher levels of civilization would have a comparatively short period there, while the man in the lower levels of civilized life might be said to come in at about midway between the two. But it must be remembered that these are very general estimates and that among civilized peoples individuals differ enormously. Some will pass very slowly and, so far as lower levels are concerned, painfully, through astral life, while the sojourn of others there is measured in minutes, and they pass happily and almost instantaneously from physical death to the heaven world. But such people are the exception, not the rule.

Communication with those who have passed on into the astral world is possible, but not always desirable, for a number of reasons. As an evidence of the continuity of consciousness in the hands of the scientific investigator, such communications have been of the greatest value. As a consolation to those who have thus come again in touch with dead friends such messages have been of inestimable value to the bereaved, particularly when they have been received in the privacy of the family circle by some of its members. For a time those who have lost the physical body are usually within easy reach through the usual methods employed for the purpose and perhaps no harm is done by such communications unless they arouse anew the grief of those who have been left behind and thus greatly depress the departed. But after the living dead get farther along, and are practically out of touch with the material world, then directing their attention backward may be positively injurious to them. For that reason careful students of the occult seldom seek to obtain messages, or at least do it with proper consideration for all the circumstances of the particular case.

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Due regard for the interests of those who have passed on, as well as for those who remain, requires that all the facts be given full weight. The truth of the matter is that it is our keen sense of loss that gives rise to the desire for a message of some sort. We long to once more get into touch with one that seems to be lost to us. We are not really thinking much about his welfare. As a matter of fact he has not lost sight of us and does not have our sense of separation. Not only is he able to see us at all times and be conscious of our feelings and emotions, but during the hours when we are asleep he is in the fullest and freest communication with us and we with him. On awakening we usually have no memory of this and if we do we think it was a dream. But it is not so with him. His memory of it is perfect and the result is that he has not our sense of separation and loss at all.

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The result of knowledge upon the subject, that is readily gained by a study of the researches of the skilled occultists, is that one comes to feel that one should rest satisfied with the fact that we do converse with the dead nightly, and leave mediumistic communications to the scientific investigators. The natural order of things is that the person who passes into the astral world shall in time fix his mind exclusively upon the inner life and be completely divorced from physical plane affairs. That is the mental and emotional condition which permits of his rapid passage through levels where he should not linger. It is said that to turn his attention backward at this time may cause him acute distress.

A reading of the Christian scriptures with a knowledge of occultism often throws a new light upon the subject. An instance of this is to be found in the story of the woman of Endor who is visited by Saul in his quest for psychic information about the crisis that has been reached in the affairs of his kingdom. The woman went into trance and acted as a medium for a communication from Samuel, who tells Saul just what will occur in the impending battle. Samuel's first words were a reproach to Saul. "Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?"^[F] was his greeting. It is the language of one who is displeased. Drawing his attention forcibly back to the material world by the strong desire Saul had to communicate with him was evidently distressing to the dead king, hence the rebuke, "Why hast thou *disquieted* me?"

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What is here said on the subject of communication, however, has reference to general principles only. There is no intention of suggesting that it is always undesirable to communicate with those who have passed over. Often those on the other side seek means of communicating and they should then find the most willing co-operation from this side. Sometimes one who has left the physical plane life has a message of great importance to deliver and such a case reverses the general rule—he would be delayed if he could *not* communicate. It would be decidedly to his advantage to free his mind of the matter. Until he has done so he may remain in a restless condition and his case falls into the category of what the spiritualists call "earth bound." He may have left undone something that a message will set right, if he can get it through, or he may have secreted something that cannot be found because he died suddenly and had no opportunity to speak of it. Or it may simply be a case of desiring to prove to materialistic friends the fact that the so-called dead are not dead, and are close at hand. It is sometimes possible for the important information to come through into physical life in the form of a dream by the living, and thus the recovery of valuables has followed.^[G] In such a case the dream is a memory of facts well known in astral life but hidden from the waking consciousness by the unresponsive material brain.

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It sometimes happens that one who thus most earnestly desires to communicate but is wholly ignorant of how to accomplish his purpose causes a good deal of annoyance. His blundering attempts to use psychic force may be wholly abortive and result only in meaningless noises, raps, the tumbling of books or dishes from shelves or the aimless movement of furniture. Annoyance is sometimes caused also by intention, on the part of those who think it is humorous to play pranks. It must be remembered that passing on to the astral life does not improve one's common sense. If while living here, he thought it amusing to astonish or delude somebody, or trick a friend into seriously accepting some absurd assertion as a fact, he still regards the same course as entertaining. This accounts for many of the foolish, and sometimes startling messages, or answers to questions, received at seances.

It has often been asked why, if communication between the physical and astral planes is possible, we do not receive information that might lead to valuable discoveries and inventions. The very fact that death does not confer wisdom explains it in part. But an even more important fact is that communication is easy with the lower levels and correspondingly difficult as the higher levels are reached. All who have had much experience with seances are familiar with the fact that "guides" or "controls," that is, the persons in the invisible realms who direct the seance and frequently speak through the medium, are very often Indians or others at a low level of evolution. The majority of the inhabitants of the astral levels with which communication is easy are not the type capable of furnishing ideas of any great value. It is on the higher levels that the man of intellectual power passes most of his astral life. The scientist or the inventor who has given so much thought to his work that he has been in some degree successful here is not likely to have much consciousness on lower levels. It is the highest of the seven subdivisions of the astral world that is the habitat of the person who has followed intellectual pursuits, during physical life, and with that level it is practically impossible for the ordinary medium to communicate.

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One of the objections to indiscriminate communication with the astral plane lies in the very fact that the lowest class of entities are most accessible. That not only accounts for the commonplace messages in such abundance, but it is frequently a source of actual danger, especially where

people form "circles" for the purpose of rendering themselves more sensitive to psychic influences. In such cases it is common to accept every message as absolute truth. There is no doubt that as a rule the astral people in charge of such a gathering are earnest and honest. But they are neither all-wise nor all-powerful, and it sometimes comes about that some of the sitters are partially or wholly obsessed by astral entities, and that may prove to be an exceedingly serious matter. Some people have thus lost their sanity and others their lives.

It is, of course, only the gross type of astral person who has a desire to seize upon the physical body of another. The purpose is to gratify desires that have outlived the physical body. The dead drunkard is perhaps the commonest example of the obsessing entity, and if the obsession is only partial it may lead to nothing worse than strong and perhaps irresistible impulses toward alcoholic stimulation. Obsession may, of course, occur without the psychic door being opened deliberately. But no obsession is possible, in any case, unless there is something within the victim responsive to the moral defect of the obsessing entity. [94]

Partial obsessions are rather common and there are frequent inquiries as to the best means of treating such a case. It may amount only to the slight annoyance of astral people hanging about and refusing to depart or to actual persecution. In all such cases the victim is, of course, in conscious touch and communication with the intruders. One of the world's greatest authorities on the subject, who is a constant investigator of the unseen regions, has given detailed answer to two questioners, and what he says is of such practical value that it is well worth reproducing. The second question itself is enlightening as to the character of the obsessing entities. The first inquirer asks:

"What is the best way to get rid of an excarnate human being who persists in occupying one's body?"

The reply follows:

"I should simply and absolutely decline to be so obsessed. The best and kindest plan would be to have an explanation with the dead person, to enquire what he wants and why he makes such persistent attempts. Quite probably, he may be some ignorant soul who does not at all comprehend his new surroundings, and is striving madly to get into touch again with the only kind of life that he understands. In that case if matters are explained to him, he may be brought to a happier frame of mind and induced to cease his ill-directed efforts. Or the poor creature may have something on his mind—some duty unfulfilled or some wrong unrighted; if this be so, and the matter can be arranged to his satisfaction, he may then be at peace. [95]

"If, however, he proves not to be amenable to reason, if in spite of all argument and explanation he refuses to abandon his reprehensible line of action, it will be necessary gently but firmly to resist him. Every man has an inalienable right to the use of his own vehicles, and encroachments of this nature should not be permitted. If the lawful possessor of the body will confidently assert himself and use his own willpower no obsession can take place.

"When such things occur, it is almost always because the victim has in the first place voluntarily yielded himself to the invading influence, and his first step therefore is to reverse that act of submission, to determine strongly to take matters into his own hands again and to resume control over his property. It is this reassertion of himself that is the fundamental requirement, and though much help may be given by wise friends, nothing which they can do will take the place of the development of willpower on the part of the victim, or obviate the necessity for it. The exact method of procedure will naturally vary according to the details of the case."

The same authority answers another question on the same subject and he is here dealing with particular entities that he has evidently seen: [96]

"I have long been troubled by entities who constantly suggest evil ideas and make use of coarse and violent language. They are always urging me to take strong drink, and goading me on to the consumption of large quantities of meat. I have prayed earnestly, but with little avail, and am driven to my wits' end. What can I do?"

To this appeal the psychic scientist replies:

"You have indeed suffered greatly; but now you must make up your mind to suffer no more. You must take courage and make a firm stand. The power of these dead people over you is only in your fear of them. Your own will is stronger than all theirs combined if you will only know that it is; if you turn upon them with vigor and determination they must yield before you. You have an inalienable right to the undisturbed use of your own vehicles, and you should insist on being left in peace. You would not tolerate an intrusion of filthy and disgusting beings into your house on the physical plane; why should you submit to it because the entities happen to be astral? If an insolent tramp forces himself into a man's house, the owner does not kneel down and pray—he kicks the tramp out; and that is precisely what you must do with these astral tramps.

"You will no doubt say to yourself that when I give you this advice I do not know the terrible power of the particular demons who are afflicting you. That is exactly what they would like you to believe—what they will try to make you believe; but do not be so foolish as to listen to them. I know the type perfectly, and mean, despicable, bullying villains they are; they will torment a weak woman for months together, but will fly in cowardly terror the moment you turn upon them in righteous anger! I should just laugh at them, but I would drive them out, hold not a moment's parley with them. Of course, they will bluster and show fight, because you have let them have their own way for so long that [97]

they will not tamely submit to expulsion; but face them with iron determination, set your will against them like an immovable rock, and down they will go. Say to them: 'I am a spark of the divine fire, and by the power of the God within me I order you to depart!' Never let yourself think for an instant of failure or of yielding; God is within you, and God cannot fail."^[H]

Probably there is no astral subject of more vital importance to any of us than that of the right attitude of mind and emotion toward the living dead. It is commonly said that we can do nothing more for them when they have passed away from physical plane life, but a greater error could not easily be made. The connection with us is by no means severed. Not only are they emotionally in touch with us but their emotions are very much keener than when they had a physical body through which to express them. They are now living in the astral body, the matter of which is enormously more responsive to emotional vibrations. A joyous emotion here would be tremendously more joyous there and a thing that would produce depression here would be a hundred times more depressing there. That fact should give pause to those who are inclined to think in sorrow, and with something of despair, about their friends who have passed on. They are not far away in space and our emotions affect them profoundly and instantly.

We are all familiar with the fact that moods are communicable. The person who is cheerful cheers up others in his vicinity, while the one who is gloomy spreads gloom wherever he goes. It is a simple matter of vibrations. It is often within the power of a member of the family who habitually has "the blues" to destroy the happiness of the entire household. If we think of the most depressing effect that can be caused by sorrow on the physical plane, and then multiply its effectiveness by a hundred, we shall have no exaggeration of the astral effects of the emotions we indulge in the physical body. If, then, the sorrow of a weeping relative distresses us here it is clear that it must bring really keen distress to the one who is the subject of such grief. His life may thus be made miserable by the very persons who would be the last to cause him sorrow if they understood what they were doing.

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We can really help the so-called dead and make them very much happier by simply changing our mournful attitude toward them. All violent expressions of grief should be avoided and a determination to make the best of the matter should be cultivated. The situation may indeed be bad, but we make it very much worse by our mourning. The funeral customs of Occidental civilization are quite consistent with its materialism. We act as nearly as possible as though we believe the dead are lost to us absolutely. We make matters as gloomy as possible. Yet we are slowly improving. Not so very long ago when anybody died those present stopped the ticking of the clock, drew down the window curtains, moved about on tiptoe, and acted generally in a way calculated to add as much as possible to the awe and the gloom. We still wear somber and depressing black and add all we can externally to our inward distress.

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A more sensible attitude of mind may be observed at any theosophical funeral and, with growing frequency, at the funerals among thinking people. A funeral should not be the occasion of a final expression of grief, but a gathering of friends who send kindly thoughts and helpful good wishes to the comrade whose life work in the physical world is finished. The general feeling should be very much like that of a party of friends who go to the pier to see a well loved traveler off on a long journey to remote parts of the earth for a sojourn of many years or possibly a lifetime. There should be constant thought of his welfare, not of the loss to his friends. Grief that thinks of itself is an expression of selfishness and is detrimental to all. One should practice self control in such a matter just as one would control a feeling of anger under different circumstances.

Naturally enough the control of grief when one we love has passed on is none too easy. But any degree of success is much better than no effort, and will certainly help the one for whom we mourn. Much can be accomplished by avoiding unnecessary incidents that bring vividly back the keen sense of loss. Many people indulge the foolish custom of regularly visiting the cemetery where the body has been interred. A little analysis will show that this is only another evidence of our materialistic modes of thought, and the custom serves to perpetuate emotions that should never have existed. We can not, of course, think too often nor too tenderly of those who have passed on, but we should do nothing that leads us to think of them as being dead, or being far away. The fact that they are alive and well and happy and near should constantly fill the mind; and all of that, in nearly all cases, will be perfectly true if we do not foolishly destroy their peace of mind with our selfish sorrow.

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Occasionally a hint on the subject comes from the astral plane people themselves. In the recent book^[I] by Sir Oliver Lodge, on his experiments in psychic research, there is a message from his son, who was killed in battle, agreeing to attend the family Christmas dinner and to occupy the chair placed for him, provided they will all refrain from gloomy thoughts about him! No one who is informed on the subject of emotional reaction on the astral body, after the loss of the physical body, could be surprised by the conditions named by the young man.

The advocates of cremation have a strong argument in the fact that the preservation of the body for a time, whether in a tomb or a grave, tends to keep grief alive. When the body is reduced to ashes the delusion that the body is somehow the man seems to have less of a material basis. Visits to a tomb or grave are unfortunate, not alone because they renew grief through thinking upon it and thus cause great distress to those for whom we mourn, but also because the environment of a cemetery is one of the worst possible for the sorrowing. It is a dismal park of concentrated griefs where each mourner accentuates the emotional distress of all others. There

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is but one sensible attitude to take toward those we have lost by death—to think of them as living a joyous, busy life and at least calling on us daily even though most of us are not sensitive enough to be conscious of the fact. We should try to realize the truth of the matter and then readjust our habits to fit the facts. The average person who is afflicted with the erroneous ideas still so common, is doing an enormous amount of injury and bringing into the lives of the very people he loves a depression of which he little dreams, and which he can change to vivid pleasure by always thinking cheerfully of them and sending them daily thoughts of serenity and peace.

FOOTNOTES:

- [F] 1 Samuel XXVIII—15.
- [G] Ch. 3, Dreams and Premonitions.—L. W. Rogers.
- [H] The Inner Life.—Leadbeater, Vol. I. p. 483.
- [I] Raymond: or Life and Death.—Lodge.

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CHAPTER IX.

REBIRTH: ITS REASONABLENESS

Life is the most elusive thing with which science has to deal but we have learned much about both life and matter in recent years, and it is a noteworthy fact that the more we learn the thinner become the ranks of the materialists. The only scientist of note who still declares his philosophy of materialism is Haeckel, and of him a brother scientist has written, "He is, as it were, a surviving voice from the middle of the nineteenth century;" and, referring to Haeckel's almost deserted ground in the scientific world, he declares that his voice "is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, not as the pioneer or vanguard of an advancing army, but as the despairing shout of a standard-bearer, still bold and unflinching, but abandoned by the retreating ranks of his comrades as they march to new orders in a fresh and more idealistic direction."

Thus is the old ground of scientific materialism being deserted by all progressive scientists. While we do not yet know a great deal about life, science has gone far enough to permit a grasp of facts and principles from which conclusions may be logically drawn and working hypotheses constructed. Sir Oliver Lodge, who is president of one of the great English Universities, and ranks as one of the world's most eminent scientists, speaking of his conception of life, says that "It is dependent on matter for its phenomenal appearance—for its manifestation to us here and now, and for all its terrestrial activities; but otherwise I conceive that it is independent, that its essential existence is continuous and permanent, though its interactions with matter are discontinuous and temporary; and I conjecture that it is subject to a law of evolution—that a linear advance is open to it—whether it be in its phenomenal or in its occult state."^[1]

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Later in the same work he expresses the opinion "that life is something outside the scheme of mechanics—outside the categories of matter and energy; though it can nevertheless control and direct material forces...."

In closing his volume on *Life and Matter* this distinguished scientist says:

"What is certain is that life possesses the power of vitalizing the complex material aggregates which exist on this planet, and of utilizing their energies for a time to display itself amid terrestrial surroundings; and then it seems to disappear or evaporate whence it came. It is perpetually arriving and perpetually disappearing. While it is here, if it is at a sufficiently high level, the animated material body moves about and strives after many objects, some worthy, some unworthy; it acquires thereby a certain individuality, a certain character. It may realize itself, moreover, becoming conscious of its own mental and spiritual existence; and it then begins to explore the Mind which, like its own, it conceives must underlie the material fabric—half displayed, half concealed, by the environment, and intelligible only to a kindred spirit. Thus the scheme of law and order dimly dawns on the nascent soul, and it begins to form clear conceptions of truth, goodness, and beauty; it may achieve something of permanent value, or a work of art or of literature; it may enter the region of emotion and may evolve ideas of the loftiest kind; it may degrade itself below the beasts, or it may soar till it is almost divine.

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"Is it the material molecular aggregate that has of its own unaided latent power generated this individuality, acquired this character, felt these emotions, evolved these ideas? There are some who try to think that it is. There are others who recognize in this extraordinary development a contact between this material frame of things and a universe higher and other than anything known to our senses; a universe not dominated

by physics and chemistry; but utilizing the interactions of matter for its own purpose; a universe where the human spirit is more at home than it is among these temporary collocations of atoms; a universe capable of infinite development, of noble contemplation and of lofty joy, long after this planet—nay, the whole solar system—shall have fulfilled its present sphere of destiny, and retired cold and lifeless upon its endless way."

Such a conception of life carries us very far from the old popular view of the origin of the race, but it is a conception that brings science and religion into perfect agreement and will enable us to understand human evolution and explain facts in life that would otherwise remain incomprehensible.

The pre-existence of the soul, as a part of universal life, was taught and commonly accepted in the early Christian period. If we accept the fact of evolution at all, and are not materialists, there is no escape from the belief of the pre-existence of the soul. Indeed, not even materialism can save one from the necessity of accepting the pre-existence of the individualized consciousness that we call a human being. [106]

Let us consider the human infant as we see it at birth. Whence came it—how can we account for it in a universe of law and order? We can understand it from the physical side. Its tiny body is a concourse of physical atoms with a prenatal history of a few months. But its mind, its consciousness, its emotions, what of them? The average man replies that God made them and they constitute the soul. But how and when were they "made"? Even the material part of this infant did not spring miraculously and instantaneously into existence. How much less possible is it that the soul did so! If we say "God made it" we have explained nothing. But it is not necessary to deny that God creates the soul in order for us to move toward an understanding of how the soul came to be. It is only necessary to say that the process of its creation was evolutionary. Nobody denies that the earth was created by evolution, although men may differ in opinion on the matter of a divine intelligence guiding its evolutionary development. The same principle must apply to the human intelligence.

Lodge wrote *Life and Matter* as a reply to Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, which presented the latter's philosophy of materialism. But Lodge did more than demolish Haeckel's premises and leave him with not an inch of scientific ground to support his theory. The English scientist raised questions that have not been answered, and cannot be answered, by the scientific materialist. He points out that the materialist's philosophy has no explanation for "the extraordinary rapidity of development, which results in the production of a fully endowed individual in the course of some fraction of a century."^[K] [107]

With those two dozen words Lodge leaves the scientific materialist speechless; for all scientists are evolutionists, and it is impossible to account for "*the extraordinary rapidity of development*" by the laws of evolution. It is well known that the evolutionary age of anything depends upon its complexity. A simple form is comparatively young while a complex one has a long evolutionary history behind it. The earth is simple compared to a human being. If, then, it has required ages to evolve the earth to its present stage how long did it take to evolve the wonderfully complex mental and emotional nature of the human being that inhabits the earth? And thus Lodge bottles Haeckel up on his own premises and shows that the very evolutionary principles to which the German scientist appeals demolish his theory! He practically says to Haeckel, "Your philosophy, sir, fails to show how it is possible for the vacuous mind of the infant to evolve into the genius of the philosopher in thirty or forty years." In other words, if the infant is nothing but the form we see it would be utter absurdity to say that that mass of matter can evolve a high grade of intelligence within a few years when it takes centuries to make a slight evolutionary gain. [108]

Look at an infant the day it is born. Study its face. One might as well search the surface of a squash for some indication of intelligence. But wait only a little while and you shall have evidence not merely of intelligence but of emotions possible only to the highest order of life. Clearly, here is not something evolved within a brief period from a mass of material atoms. Such a theory would be as unscientific as the popular belief in miraculous creation at which the scientific materialist scoffs. The swift change from the vacuity of the infant mind to the intellectual power of the adult in the "fraction of a century" is not the creation of something but its *manifestation—the coming through into visible expression of that which already exists*. The soul, the consciousness, the real man, consisting of the whole of the mental and emotional nature, which has been built up through thousands of years of evolution, is coming once more to rebirth, to visible expression in a material body.

The body is, of course, but the new physical instrument of the old soul—an instrument, as certainly as the violin is the instrument and a vehicle for the musician's expression. At every turn our materialistic conceptions mislead us and prevent the perception of nature's truth. It is because we think of the body as being actually the person, that it seems improbable that an old soul has entered the infant body. We think of the power and intelligence of an old soul and then look at the baby and find no indication of such things. But that is only because the baby body is such a new and undeveloped instrument that it is at first useless and only slowly can it be brought under control of the soul and made to express its intelligence and power. The body is a growing instrument, not a completed one. [109]

Let us suppose that musical instruments grow as physical bodies do. Suppose there was a time when the piano was keyless, as a baby is toothless. Suppose that sounding boards have a period of immaturity and that the whole mechanism of the instrument is in a state that can only be characterized as infantile. If a master musician attempts to play on such a piano his performance

would by no means be an indication of his ability. A competent critic who could hear the performance but not see the musician would promptly declare that no really great musician was touching the keys. And that is precisely the mistake we make in assuming that the immature body of an infant is capable of expressing the intellectual power of the old soul, or, to put it differently, denying that a returned, old soul is in possession of the infant body simply because there is no physical plane evidence of the fact. If pianos slowly grew to maturity then only when the instrument was mature could the master musician give a practical demonstration of his skill; and only when the physical body has reached its maturity can the soul that is using it fully express itself.

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In the early years of the physical body the soul is only very partially expressed through it. The entrance of the consciousness into the physical world is slow and gradual. It is somewhat like the growth of a plant, very gradual, but the analogy is not a good one, for a plant is very little like a human body. It is impossible to find a material equivalent of the dawning of consciousness on the physical plane. Beginning about four and a half months before the birth of the physical body and continuing for a period of several years the soul, or consciousness, is engaged in the process of anchorage in the physical world. For a long time the center of consciousness remains above the material plane and during the early years of childhood the consciousness is divided between the astral and physical worlds, with the result that the child is often somewhat confused and brings fragments of astral consciousness into physical life. When the physical body is about seven years old the consciousness may be said to be centered on the physical plane, but only when the body and brain of the soul's new instrument are mature has the opportunity come for the fullest expression.

Some of the difficulties commonly associated in the mind with the thought of the pre-existence and rebirth of the soul will disappear if we do not lose sight of the fact that the soul is a center of consciousness, which is always consciousness somewhere, but which very gradually shifts its focus from plane to plane. Its permanent home is in that body of filmy matter drawn about the ego in the higher levels of the heaven world. From that point it sends energies outward and draws about itself in the lower levels of the mental world a body, or vehicle of consciousness, that is not permanent but which will serve the purpose of functioning for a period on that plane. Downward again the energies are sent, building about the center of consciousness on the astral plane a temporary body of astral matter, temporary in the same sense that the physical body is temporary, and which shall serve the consciousness in the astral, or emotional world, during the whole of the physical plane life and for some time afterward. Still outward, or downward, the soul sends its energies till the material world is reached, when it begins to function partially, and very feebly, through the infant physical body.

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For the time being the soul's evolution lies on the physical plane where certain lessons are to be learned. After the early years of childhood are over the consciousness is firmly anchored here, where the chief work is to be done, during the hours of the waking consciousness. During sleep the ego temporarily lays aside the physical body and functions in the astral body in the astral world. The material body sleeping here is merely a deserted and empty vehicle, magnetically connected with the soul, and awaiting its return.

As childhood, youth, maturity and old age pass, complex experiences come to the soul thus functioning here. Other souls functioning through physical bodies are encountered and various relationships are established. Out of the complexity of social, business, religious and political activities the soul gets a large and varied experience. Sooner or later the death of the physical body closes the chapter. The gathering of such experience has ceased, not because the soul has acquired all possible physical world knowledge, but because its instrument of consciousness here has worn out.

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Death cuts the soul off from its physical plane connection and the center of its consciousness is then shifted to the astral plane. There the purgative process goes forward, as explained in a previous chapter. As that proceeds the soul gradually gets free from one grade of astral matter after another and with the loss of each the man becomes conscious on a higher level. The physical body is lost suddenly but the matter of the astral body gradually wears away until there is so little left that the soul has lost connection with the astral world also. This means that the center of consciousness has shifted to the mental plane, or heaven world, where the man will function on the lower levels.

There in the mental world, functioning through the vehicle of mental matter, a very important process goes on. The heaven world life is a harvest time in which assimilation of experience takes place. The consciousness there deeply broods over the experiences of life and extracts the essence from them which is transmuted into faculty and power for future greater expression. It is thus that the soul grows in wisdom and power through its long evolution.

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When the heaven life is finished, when the harvest of experience has been threshed out and the net gain has been built into the enduring causal body, the mental body, like the astral, has been completely dissipated. The end of a cycle of experience—of a day in the evolutionary school—has come and the physical, astral and mental bodies have all perished. Nothing remains but the soul, the real man, the ego, functioning through the causal body which persists. From that the ego again sends the forces outward, in the first activity toward rebirth, first forming a new mental body by drawing about itself the matter of the lower levels of the mental plane, then securing a new astral body on the astral plane and finally taking possession of another infant body in process of formation on the physical plane, into which it will in due course be reborn.

The period between these successive appearances of the soul in a succession of physical bodies varies greatly and depends on a number of things. The length of time spent upon the astral plane has already been discussed. The time spent in the heaven world depends upon the mental and moral forces generated during the physical and astral life. If there is a great harvest of experience it will require a longer time to transmute it, while, of course, one who has thought little and loved but little will have a shorter period there, for it is the heart and head forces that have their culmination in the mental world. The question is a rather complex one and other factors come into play, including the intensity of the heaven world life. In general terms, however, it can be said that the heaven life of the ordinarily intelligent person will commonly be a period several times the length of his combined physical and astral life. Some people will have only two or three hundred years between incarnations while others may have six or seven centuries and still others a much longer period.

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In getting a right understanding of the subject of rebirth, or reincarnation, it is necessary to keep in mind the fact that the soul, or center of individualized consciousness, is the man and that the physical body is merely an instrument he uses for a number of years; that the causal body is his permanent body for the whole of human evolution; that the mental plane is his home plane and that from there he sends forth successive expressions of himself into these lower planes. With such facts before us there should be no confusion of thought about the successive personalities of an individual. Yet we sometimes hear people speak of the absurdity of supposing that a person can be one man in one incarnation and another man at a later rebirth. Of course no such thing occurs. An individual remains the same individual forever. "But," objects the critic, "may I not have been Mr. Jones, in England six hundred years ago, whereas I am now certainly Mr. Brown, in America at this moment? If so is that not a case of being two individuals?"

It is certainly not a case of being two individuals. It is a case of one individual being expressed through a physical body six hundred years ago in England, dying from it, spending a fairly long period in the astral plane and heaven world, and then again expressing himself through another physical body in America at the present time. The confusion of thought on the part of the questioner arises from thinking of the physical body as being the man. But it is no more the man than the clothing he wears. It is true that he is known at one period as Jones and at another as Brown, but that no more affects his individuality than the assumption of an *alias* by a fleeing criminal changes him. The name applies exclusively to the physical body, or personality, as distinguished from the individuality. That body is but the temporary clothing of the soul. Let us suppose that a man's name were applied to his clothing and changed with his clothing as it does with his body. We might then know him as Mr. Lightclothes in the summer and as Mr. Darkclothes in the winter, but neither the change of clothing or name would in the least degree make him somebody else. The majority of women change their names in each incarnation. A man may know a certain woman as Miss Smith when she is a slip of a girl, free from care and with little serious thought of life. Twenty years later she may be Mrs. Brown, his wife, a thoughtful matron, the mother of children. She has changed her name and greatly changed in character, too, but she is the same individual.

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It seems probable that a person may change quite as much between infancy and old age as between one incarnation and the next. Even the difference between a youth of twenty years who is an artist and the same man at three score and ten who has given forty years to scientific study and research, may be enormous, but the individuality is, of course, identical. It has rapidly evolved and greatly improved, and that is just what occurs to the soul by repeated rebirths—steady evolutionary development of the eternal individual.

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The reincarnating process by which the soul evolves is somewhat analogous to the growth of a young physical body. The process consists of alternating periods of objective and subjective activity. How does the body of a child grow? It consumes food, the objective activity. It then digests and assimilates it, the subjective activity. These periods must alternate or there can be no growth, because neither alone is the complete process. The one is the complement of the other. So it is in the evolution of the soul by reincarnation. The experience of life is the food on which the soul grows. The physical plane existence is the objective period in which the food is gathered. At death the man passes into the invisible realms where the subjective process is carried on. He digests and assimilates his experiences and the gist is stored in the causal body and its growth includes an actual increase in size, just as in the case of the child's physical body.

The same law governs mental and moral growth as it operates in our daily affairs. A young man is in college. How does his intellect grow? By precisely the same process of alternating periods of objective and subjective activity. In the class room the instructor puts a mathematical problem on the blackboard and explains it. With the outward senses of sight and hearing, aided by pencil and notebook, the student gathers the food for mental growth. This period of objective activity comes to an end and he then retires to the privacy of his room and there the subjective period begins. He deeply thinks over the problem. His material, the food for mental growth, is only a few notes that serve to keep the experience in his mind. At first all that they signify is not obvious, but as he turns the various points over and over in his mind their significance becomes clearer and fuller. It is the subjective process of digestion. Little by little new light dawns in the student's mind. Finally he has complete comprehension of the mathematical principles involved, and the process of assimilation is finished. This subjective period is the complement of the objective period and they must go on alternating or intellectual growth will stop. When the process of digestion and assimilation is finished the student must return to the classroom for further mental food and when he arrives it is by virtue of the fact that he did digest the previous lesson that he is able to

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take a higher and more difficult one. And precisely so it is with the reincarnating soul. In the interval between incarnations it so assimilates the experiences of the last physical life that it comes to rebirth with added abilities which enable it to take higher and more difficult lessons than it could previously master.

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In the case of both physical growth by eating and mental growth by instruction there is no possible escape from the law of alternating periods of objective and subjective activity. When the child has digested and assimilated a meal there is but one possible thing that can follow—return to his source of supply for another meal. When the student has digested and assimilated the lesson given to him the only possibility of further mental growth lies in his return to the classroom for more material. And so it is with the human soul in its work of evolving its latent powers and possibilities. There is no other road forward but the cyclic one that brings it back to the physical life incarnation after incarnation, but always at a higher point than it previously touched. The very hunger of the child that insures its return to the table for more food is analogous to the desire of the soul for sentient expression that brings it to rebirth.

These alternating periods with the element of constant return are found everywhere in the economy of nature. All her evolutionary expressions are cyclic. But the cyclic movement is not in closed circles. It represents a spiral. The "evolutionary ladder" that the soul climbs is a winding stairway. In its upward progress it makes many rounds but it is always mounting and never returns to the same point. In each cycle, that is made up of the journey from the heaven world through the astral plane, into the physical and then back through the astral plane into the heaven world, it touches each of them at a higher point, or in a higher state of development, than it had previously attained. Each rebirth finds it abler here to gather a larger harvest of experience and each return to the mental plane, or heaven world, finds it abler to digest and assimilate its experiences, and to comprehend more of the realities of the life of its home plane.

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This round, or cycle, through the physical, astral and mental regions, is a continuous progressive journey of the soul which began away back at the dawn of mind in man and will continue until he is the perfected mental and moral being. At each incarnation here he gathers experience in proportion to his alertness and to the opportunities his previous lives have made for him. He learns to help others, to be sympathetic, to be tolerant. Such activities will give him pleasure in the astral life and joy and wisdom in the mental region, or heaven world. But he also does some evil things. He makes enemies, he generates hatred and he injures others. This will give him distress in the astral life and no results for soul growth or general progress in the heaven world. If he does an equal amount of good and harm his progress will be slow. If he does much good and little evil his progress will be rapid and his existence happy. If he is a man of great energy, and no very great moral development, and selfishly does much wrong, he will suffer much in the astral life.

It often puzzles the student of elementary theosophy to be told that the soul passes through the purgation of the astral plane and goes on into the heaven world only to return to another incarnation and later to again enter the astral purgatory. Why, it is asked, must one who has thus been purified be again purified? The astral reactions are the results of the blunders made in each incarnation. Each of us in any given incarnation creates by his wrong doing the purgatory that awaits him after death. If he does no wrong there cannot possibly be any reaction. As a matter of occult fact the average good man will find the astral plane life a happy existence and will soon pass on to the blissful heaven world. As for the evil doer the suffering relates only to his evil deeds. Let us say he has committed murder. When the reaction of the evil force he has generated is over and he passes on into the heaven plane it does not mean that he is incapable of future evil. It means that he has probably learned thoroughly the lesson that it is very foolish to take life. But there are many other lessons he has not learned. When he passes into the heaven world he leaves all evil behind him. He is as one who puts his shoes aside to enter a temple. The astral body, like the physical, has perished and it is the freed soul that enters the heaven world. But when he returns through the astral plane to reincarnation he is clothed again in astral matter and this new astral body is exactly representative of his attainments in evolution. In his coming incarnation he will have other physical plane experiences and learn other lessons. The next time probably he will not kill, but perhaps he will cheat and steal or be a drunkard. These errors will react upon him in the astral life that follows. In a coming incarnation he will be wise enough to be temperate and neither cheat nor steal; but perhaps he will be a gossip and work much evil through slander. This in turn will bring its pain. And so in time he will learn to generate no evil force at all but to live in good will and helpfulness toward everybody. Then his progress will be rapid indeed, his life on all planes will be happy and the painful part of human evolution will be over.

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The purpose of evolution is no less obvious than the fact of evolution. Evolution is an unfolding process in which the latent becomes the active and the inner life is more and more fully expressed in outer form. The development and improvement in form keeps pace with the necessities of the unfolding life. In the lowest levels of the animal kingdom the form is but a cell. But as the life comes into fuller and fuller expression, limbs for locomotion and, in due course, the organs for hearing, and seeing, and the other mechanism of the developing consciousness, are evolved. In the human kingdom the vehicle of consciousness comes to its highest possible form and then evolution goes on in the perfecting of the physical form. In the process of continually changing the matter of the body it is possible for the brain to be constantly improved and the whole body to grow more and more sensitive and gradually to become a better and truer expression of the evolving life within. In each incarnation the physical body thus improves. The

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evolution of life and form keep pace. Ultimately perfection of form, as well as perfection of intellect and morality, will be reached and human evolution will be finished.

The purpose of evolution, then, is clear. Man is a god in the making—not actually, but only potentially a god, a being to whom all wisdom, perfect compassion and unlimited power are possible; and by the process of evolution he changes the latent into the active. He is at first only an individualized center of consciousness within the All-Consciousness, a mere fragment of the divine life. His relationship to God is something like that of a seed to its plant, a product of it that has latent within it all the characteristics of the plant and the power to become a plant. It is not a plant and neither is man a god; but when it has sent out a sprout and taken root in the soil it is a plant in the making; and when the human being has begun to evolve his latent spiritual qualities he is a god in the making. The theosophical view is that man is essentially divine.

Critics sometimes ask why, if man is originally divine, it is necessary for him to pass through any evolutionary process. Divinity here indicates merely the essential nature of the human being, not his possession of either knowledge or power or any degree of spiritual perfection. It is as though we should say that the infant son of a great king is royal. The word "royal," like the word "divine," indicates a relationship. The baby royalist is not a king. But he is a king in the making. He has much to learn. He must be educated in statecraft and he must evolve diplomacy. After much experience and development he will, in time, be capable of ruling an empire. At present this helpless infant bears little resemblance to a king. Nevertheless, on the day of his birth he was as much royal as he will ever be. In the same sense the divinity of man represents potential possibilities rather than an obvious fact of the moment. Man is an embryo god and, in time, he shall evolve faculties and powers that his present limited consciousness can not even comprehend. He is not an ephemeral creature of physical origin that lives a brief span to catch a glimpse of immortality and perish, but the deathless son of the living God, and by right divine he walks the upward way of eternal life.

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Some people appear to accept evolution as a matter of course, in a general way, but they appear unwilling to admit that the race has really made any evolutionary progress. Even scientific men have sometimes expressed doubt whether the world is growing better. In a newspaper interview an English scientist was quoted as saying a few years ago that the race is just as wicked today as at any time within recorded history. But if he was correctly reported it must have been a hasty expression of opinion which a little deliberation would have led him to revise. It is true that things are still bad enough but they are certainly enormously better than they were some centuries ago. To say that the world is full of crime and violence proves nothing; nor does even the fact that a civilized nation has reverted to the wartime practices of savage life furnish real ground for a pessimistic view. What we have to do in determining whether there has been any racial progress in morality is to take as our standard of measurement something that tests the collective conscience. How does the world of today view war and how did the world in the day of Caesar regard it? There is plenty to shock us now but the very fact that it does shock us is the best evidence of moral progress. Atrocities were expected and taken as a matter of course some centuries ago. They are not the rule now but the rare exception and those guilty of them are likely to make their name a by-word among nations. Well within the era of recorded history the usages of nations' condemned prisoners of war to become slaves for life. Now the rule is to feed and clothe them and at the close of the conflict to send them home. A simple thing like public sports may be used as a measure of public morals. They show what the collective conscience approves. In these days there is very little of brutality in public sports. Professional pugilism still lingers, but barely lingers, in the most enlightened nations. In less progressive countries like Spain and Mexico bull fighting is popular. That is about all we can say against modern popular entertainment. But if we look backward to the Roman period we find a cruelty in public sports that is comparatively shocking. Gladiators were compelled to fight to the death and offenders were devoured by starving wild beasts and it all made a Roman holiday. Such "sports" would, of course, be utterly impossible anywhere in the world today. But at that time they were matters of course in the life of the world's greatest empire. The fact that the race has evolved morally and that the collective conscience marks a higher point on the ethical thermometer than in the past is too obvious for argument.

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Now, how is that evolutionary progress to be accounted for? It will not do to say that the Christian religion has wrought the change because, splendid as are the teachings of the Christ, the world has not accepted them and shaped its civilization by them. If it had done so the world war would have been impossible. Not only have the so-called Christian nations wrangled and fought over commercial spoils through all their history but class has been arrayed against class and every gain in either personal liberty or economic improvement has been wrested by force from those who profited by the misfortunes of others. In other words, the particular improvements that should have been brought about by religion were compelled, not freely volunteered. All religious teaching helps but, allowing all we reasonably may for the influence of Christianity, we are still unable to account for the change in the common conscience of the race, an evolutionary gain that has been going steadily on since long, long before the coming of the Christ. How then shall we account for it?

If the hypothesis of reincarnation is sound the progress of the race in morality becomes simple. The majority of the great groups of souls that constituted the civilized nations in the time when Rome was mistress of the world have had several incarnations in that time and in each sojourn on the astral plane have had the severe lesson of the painful reaction from cruelty to others. Thus does nature gradually change the cruel man to the merciful man. In every incarnation the soul

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grows more humane as well as more intelligent. All of the lessons learned in any incarnation are carried forward into the next life, and thus compassion grows until there is ultimately perfect sympathy with all suffering. Both the progress of the soul and of the race are comprehensible from the viewpoint of reincarnation.

Except by that hypothesis how is it possible to explain such evolutionary progress? Those who do not believe in the pre-existence of the soul and hold that it is in some way brought into being at the time of conception or birth, are put in the very illogical position of saying that the reason why the world is better now than it was in the Roman period is because it pleases God to create a better kind of souls now than he created then!

The tendency of large groups of people, tribes or nations, to act in a way that imitates, or nearly duplicates, what has been done centuries before by other tribes or nations, is such a common phenomenon that it has given rise to the declaration that history repeats itself. The fact of reincarnation shows why it repeats itself. A nation like the Romans, or the Carthaginians, are bound together in the subtle ties that are formed by the intimate relationships of constant association. The group tends to persist and the members of it are largely drawn together and regrouped in the following incarnations. All have evolved beyond the level of the previous centuries but the general traits and tendencies remain and the same general policies are likely to shape the national affairs. There comes a time in the existence of the great group, or nation, when the old environment will no longer serve for its further collective evolution as well as some other country. The majority then reincarnate elsewhere and the old country comes gradually to be inhabited by a different great group of souls. Hence the remarkable difference in the people of a given nation in different periods. Compare Rome in the time of Caesar to Rome late in the Middle Ages, or compare the mighty civilization of ancient Egypt with modern Egypt. It is high-class egos that make a great nation and when a country has no more lessons to teach them, or rather when another country will serve as a better environment for their further progress, they return in rebirth to the more advantageous spot on the earth, and a different set of souls come into possession of the abandoned environment. The valley of the Nile, that was once the home of an energetic people with a flourishing civilization would not now serve such a purpose. The center of virile civilization has shifted to central and northern Europe because only that environment, in full touch with the great commercial stream of the economic world, can serve the purpose. As the world is today what could a pushing, energetic, up-to-date group of souls do if born into Egypt? Nothing but leave it. So they are not reincarnated there, but other souls that are at the point in evolution where the primitive life of an isolated country will give the simpler lessons they must acquire, inherit the abandoned environment. As an individual moves continually onward in each return to incarnation to professional and business environments that will enable him to put into effect all the new skill and wisdom he has gained, so a nation goes on to greater and greater opportunities. Souls that made the greatness of Greece and Carthage and Rome are now making the greatness of Europe and America. Such facts explain many things that have seemed puzzling. How, for example, was it possible for the world's greatest civilization to spring up suddenly in Europe from barbarous peoples? When Rome declined—declined because her people largely reincarnated elsewhere—Europe was inhabited by slightly civilized hordes. To assume that since then, in a few centuries—a mere passing moment in the great lapse of time required for race evolution—the civilization today could arise, would be to ignore the fundamentals of evolution. But when we understand that great groups of old souls incarnate in the strong physical bodies which the more primitive peoples could bring into the world, the mystery of the rapid rise of a great civilization in Europe is solved.

The principle of rebirth holds also with the animal kingdom at a high level in it. The last phase of evolution in the animal kingdom is the individualizing of the consciousness. A particularly intelligent cat or dog, for example, may be just finishing animal evolution and will be reborn at the lowest human level. Previous to its individualization it evolves in a group with others of its kind, animated by a common ensoulment that has not reached the level of complete self-consciousness. At that group-soul stage the experience of each animal in the group adds to the knowledge of all. This theosophical teaching on one of nature's most interesting facts enables us to understand many things that would otherwise remain mysterious. Instinct has never been explained by science. Some of its best known expressions are altogether mysterious. Why does a young wild animal hide from the enemies of its kind but not from friends, when it has never seen either? A quail a day old will fall upon its side with a chip or small stone or bit of grass firmly clutched in its tiny claws to hide its body, and remain perfectly motionless at the approach of a human being, but will take no alarm at the passing of a squirrel or a rabbit. How does a young chick know the difference between a crow and a hawk? And why, in remote places like the antarctic regions, are both young and old birds and animals unafraid of man? The group-soul is a clear and simple explanation of all such phenomena. The youngest have the knowledge of the oldest because they are attached to the same group-soul, or source of consciousness. The young quails of this season come back to rebirth from the group-soul that is the storehouse of the experiences of the quails that were killed by men in past seasons, and thus all young things know the common enemy. In the remote regions referred to the killing proclivities of the human being have not become known and there is no "instinct" to warn.

An excellent bit of evidence on the subject of the group-soul is the fact, often chronicled but not explained, that when telephone or telegraph lines are built in new countries the birds fly against the wires and are killed by thousands, the first season. But when the next season's birds are hatched they are wise and avoid the wires! If the group-soul were not a fact in nature it would naturally require a long time for wire education. No such sudden adjustment would be possible.

Reincarnation represents continuous evolution with no waste of time or loss of energy. Death is not the sudden break in the life program that the popular belief pictures it. The common view of death is as erroneous as the common view of birth. If death were what most people believe it to be it would constitute a blunder of nature—an irrational interruption of orderly development. In nature's economy there is conservation of energy and no loss can arise through the change called death. If the popular belief that at death we go far away to a totally different kind of existence were sound then death would usually mean an enormous waste. A young man is educated for some particular work, engineering, architecture or statecraft, and graduates only perhaps to die soon afterward. All that time and energy spent in getting such an education would be largely lost either if death ends all, or is the last he will know of the material world. But nature does not thus blunder. Her law of conservation is always operative. All the skill and wisdom acquired will be brought back in rebirth and will be used in the future incarnations.

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A child in school is a fair analogy for a soul in evolution. The child cannot get an education in a term nor in a year. He must return often to the same school, after the rest of regular vacations. He may use new books with higher lessons but he returns periodically to the same environment. Continuous attendance would be as unthinkable as finishing his education in a single term. In evolution the soul returns periodically to the physical world, or plane, for the same reasons. Continuous life here until all material experience is gained would be impossible. Aside from the need of the double process of acquiring and digesting experience the physical body would become a hindrance to evolution. Within certain limits the physical brain can respond to the requirements of the growing soul, but a new body is in time an absolute necessity to further evolution.

If we give a little thought to the evolutionary progress the ordinary person must make to raise him to mental and moral perfection, the absurdity of a single lifetime becomes apparent. Consider, a moment, intellectual perfection. It would mean a development of the mind to the point of genius in many directions. If we combine into one mind the attainments of the mathematical genius, the musical genius, the inventive genius, the statecraft genius, and so on until every line of intellectual activity is included, we then have only the perfect mental man. On the moral side we must add to that the combined qualities of the saints. Then we have the perfected human being, with nothing more to be learned from incarnation here. His further evolution belongs to superphysical realms.

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In trying to comprehend the evolution of the soul, that slowly changes it life after life from the savage to the civilized state and finally raises it to perfection, it is helpful to observe how this great work corresponds to the smaller cycle of a single incarnation. A great character in history begins with helpless infancy. Steadily he progresses, unfolding new power at each step. He passes through the graded schools, slowly acquiring elementary lessons. College follows with higher and more difficult mental acquirements. Then he enters professional life and begins to use his intellect with more and more initiative. He moves on into public life with increased duties and responsibilities. From one post of honor he rises to another with increasing ability and mastery, until at last he is the head of a nation and has become a world figure. Even so it is in the evolution of the soul. Life by life we rise, evolving new powers and virtues amidst every increasing opportunities and responsibilities. In one incarnation we have conditions that evolve courage. In another we are thrown into situations that develop tolerance. In still another we acquire patience and balance. In all of these incarnations we steadily evolve intellect and strengthen all previously acquired virtues. In each life we find the new conditions that are necessary for the exercise of our added abilities and, ultimately, with the powers, the spiritual insight and the ripened wisdom of the gods themselves, we move forward to higher fields of evolution.

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FOOTNOTES:

[J] "Life and Matter," Lodge, p. 119, 120.

[K] Life and Matter.—Lodge, p. 121.

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CHAPTER X.

REBIRTH: ITS JUSTICE

No matter how much we may differ in our view of the relationship between God and man there is general agreement about the attributes of the Supreme Being. All ascribe to him unlimited power, wisdom, love and, of course, the perfection of all those desirable qualities we see in

human beings. The theosophical view is that all we know in man of power, wisdom, love, justice, beauty, harmony, et cetera, are faint but actual manifestations of the attributes of the deity. All who are not materialists, denying the existence of a Supreme Being, will agree that the wisdom and justice of God must be perfect. It would be illogical and inconsistent to limit or qualify His attributes. Either He is all-wise and absolutely just, or else the materialist is right. We cannot have a deity at all unless He represents perfect justice.

Another point on which all but the materialists must agree is that creation is so ordered that the common welfare of humanity is best served by just the conditions of life that surround us. Nothing is different from what it should be unless it is because of man's failure to do what he should do for his own welfare. If it were otherwise what would become of the argument that an omniscient God has ordered it as it is? If, then, things are as they should be in the truest interests of man, and we find things in life that, according to our views of creation, are not right and just, it necessarily follows that the views we hold are erroneous.

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The popular belief is that human beings constitute a special creation; that whenever a baby is born God creates a soul or consciousness for that body and that after a life of many years, or a few days, or a few minutes, as the case may be, the body dies and the consciousness goes to dwell in remote regions for ever and ever. If the person lived a good life and also believed in the current religion he will be "saved" and will be eternally happy. If he did not live a good life but finally "believed" before death he will be saved anyway and be just as happy as though he had lived right from the start. If he did live a good life, but was not born with the ability to believe easily, he will be lost and will be eternally miserable. According to this theory of special creation God makes people of all sorts. None of them can help being what they are created. Some are wise and some are foolish. Those who are smart enough to find the way of salvation will finally have heaven added to their original gift of wisdom. Those who are not smart enough to find it will finally have hell added to their original lack of sense. This is what some people are pleased to call divine justice!

It will hardly do to argue that the possibility that all may at last be happy in an endless heaven, makes it unimportant that there are inequalities now. The majority of the theologians do not admit that such a state awaits the whole of the human race, and the comparatively few who do believe it will hardly venture to assert that present justice can be determined by future happiness. Even if we positively knew that eternal bliss awaited everybody after the close of this physical life how could that make it just that one person shall be born a congenital criminal and another shall be born a poet and philosopher? How could it make it right that one is born to life-long illness, suffering and poverty, while another inherits both wealth and a sound physical body? Not even the certainty of future happiness would be compensation for present inequalities. But why should there be any such inequalities if God represents unlimited power and perfect justice? Why should there be any poverty when, if He really created the soul itself instantaneously, He can as certainly create any necessary condition for the soul? Why poverty and disease and suffering at all? There must be a better answer to such questions than that "it pleased God to have it so." It is surely little better than blasphemy to suggest that any kind of hard conditions for man are pleasing to the deity.

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To hold that any future condition of happiness can make present justice out of the truly terrible inequalities of life, would be much like a millionaire who has two sons giving one of them all the advantages of wealth, travel, skilled instructors and special care, while the other was permitted to wear rags and go hungry. If the neglected son asked why he was thus treated while his brother was most carefully provided for, the father might reply with some indignation, "You are to have plenty in the future! My will is so drawn that when I die my great wealth will be equally divided between you and your brother. You will then be a millionaire with more money than you can possibly spend. So don't be foolish about your hardships now. Learn to starve like a gentleman!" The father's position in such a case would be just as reasonable as that of those who think a heaven hereafter can justify an earthly hell now.

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Now let us take some of the particular facts of life that puzzle us and test them with the hypothesis of special creation, and also with the hypothesis of reincarnation, and see which can really explain them in a satisfactory manner. We will take some facts of real life. In a Massachusetts prison there is an old man whose name became familiar to many of us in our youth. He was then known as Jesse Pomeroy, the boy murderer. The present generation scarcely knows him. But forty years or more ago he was talked about by all the newspapers. For the crime of murdering his playmates the boy was sent to prison for life. Why did Pomeroy become a noted criminal in childhood? If the theory of special creation is sound he was created and put in the world to fit himself for a future heaven. But he was created in such fashion that he was deficient in moral perception and he began life with an act that led to his expulsion from society. If God created this soul as we first knew him why was he not created with the moral balance of a law-abiding citizen so that he could have lived long and peacefully in civilized society and have been prepared for heaven at death? What could have been the purpose of giving him a brain that could not think soundly and a conscience that welcomed murder? That leads us inevitably to the question, Why are criminals created at all? Why are idiots created? The deeper we look into the facts of life the more unsatisfactory does the theory of special creation become because we find a thousand things that contradict it and show its inconsistency. If the purpose of God was to create a heaven to be enjoyed by those who reach it we cannot see why He should create a humanity the majority of which is incapable of ever attaining it. If He creates them as they come into the world at birth why are not all of them created wise and kind? Why must most of them blunder through

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life, making all sorts of mistakes, bringing suffering to others by their unkindness or cruelty and only, in the end, to pass from a life of failure to eternal punishment for that failure? There is no reason, no justice, no sanity in such a theory.

Now let us turn to the explanation of reincarnation. According to that, Pomeroy has had many past incarnations and will have many more. Like all the rest of us he came up from primitive man. We have all learned the lessons of civilized life slowly by experience like children acquiring lessons from their books. The majority have come along well and developed a fair share of intellect in dealing with life's problems, and some degree of sympathy for others. Some have evolved rapidly like hard working pupils and they are called geniuses. Some have lagged behind and have learned very little. They are like the truants at school who have broken the rules and run away from their lessons. These laggards of the human race are the dullards and the criminals, who have moved so slowly incarnation after incarnation, or are so much younger in evolution, that they are now bringing savage traits into our present civilized life.

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Reincarnation not only explains who and what the criminal is but it also explains away the hell with which special creation threatens him. No hell awaits him except that which he has created himself by what he has done. By the law of cause and effect all the cruelty and suffering he has inflicted will react upon him to his sorrow, but will also serve for his enlightenment. In his next incarnation the kind of body he will have and the environment in which he will live will be determined exactly by the thoughts and emotions and acts of this and past incarnations. He will therefore neither go to a heaven for which he is not fitted nor to a hell which he does not justly deserve. He will simply come back in another physical body and have a chance to try it again, but he will have to make the trial under the conditions which his conduct has merited.

And what of the idiot? According to special creation we cannot possibly explain him. It would be blasphemous to believe that God creates a mindless man. If one soul is given a mind and another is not, and for no reason whatever, it is the most monstrous injustice that ever forced itself upon the understanding of man! Think for a moment of the difference between the idiot and the normal person. The man of sound mind has before him the opportunity of progress, of mental and moral development. The avenues of business and professional life are open before him. He is free to try his powers and win his way. Wealth, power and fame are all possible for him. All the joys of social life may be his. Think of him surrounded by his family and friends, successful, satisfied, happy, and then think of the life of the idiot. Language cannot express the horror of the contrast! If there were no other explanation of life than that of special creation it would change the world into the hopeless hell of a mad-house. Again reincarnation saves us from either blasphemy or madness. The idiot, like the congenital cripple, differs from the normal man only in the body, which is the instrument of the soul. Deformity of the body is a limitation of the ego who functions through it. A withered arm, a club foot, a deformed back, in this incarnation are results of unfortunate causes which that soul has generated in past lives. In idiocy the malformation is in the brain. Of course this is not an accident. There is no element of chance which places the limitation in one body where it causes but little trouble and in another where it prevents mental activity and thus produces idiocy. In each case it is the exact working out of the law. The body of the idiot is the physical plane representation of a soul that has made a serious blunder in the past, possible by limiting another with cruel restraint, and the gross misuse of his intellect and power in that way has operated to prevent his using it at all in the present life. But such limitations belong to the outer planes. It is the form that limits and when the form perishes the limitation disappears. As with the criminal no hell is needed to punish the idiot. He has made his own hell by his mistake in the past and in this incarnation he must live in it and expiate his blunder. Perhaps it may seem to some that since the idiot is incapable of realizing the life of the normal person the situation represents no real misfortune for him. But idiocy on the physical plane does not mean idiocy in the soul. Even from the astral plane the ego may keenly feel the horror of functioning for a lifetime through such a physical body, as one here would feel the anguish of incarceration in a dungeon.

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The criminal and the idiot are striking illustrations of the failure of the theory of special creation to satisfactorily explain the facts of life. But if we turn to the other extreme and consider the most fortunate people in the world we shall find there, too, precisely the same failure to explain. By the hypothesis of special creation we find a gross injustice done to the soul born an ignoramus. Yet we find others possessing enough intelligence for several people. In the case of Macaulay we have the evidence in his own handwriting in a letter the date of which proves his age, that he was reading Greek and Latin and studying mathematics deeply when seven years old. There are many other cases of the remarkable display of talents in childhood, but a single instance will serve for all. It is all the better as an illustration because it is a contemporaneous case and the facts are known to scores of living people. It is recorded of William James Sidis, of Brookline, Massachusetts, that at six years of age he entered a grammar school and in six months had completed the work of seven grades. At the age of seven he had gone so far with his mathematical studies that his father, Professor Boris Sidis, could be of little assistance to him. He worked out the most abstruse and difficult problems with the greatest ease and invented new systems of computation which attracted much attention. When eight years old he entered the Brookline High School and in six weeks had completed the mathematical course and began writing a book on astronomy. He then took up the study of French, German, Latin and Russian. On leaving school he took up mathematics as a specialty and invented a system of logarithms based on the number 12 instead of 10. This was inspected by several well known mathematicians who pronounced it perfect in every detail. He applied for admission to Harvard University but the authorities refused his petition on account of his youth, only, since he could have passed the

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examination with ease. He tried again the next year and was again refused on the same ground. But at eleven years of age, having passed the entrance examination for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he was judged to know enough of chemistry and kindred subjects to make him eligible for admission to the Harvard medical school. He then entered upon a special course at Harvard because the ordinary course in college was far below the abilities of this boy of eleven years. Professor James, of Harvard, the famous psychologist, has pronounced him the greatest mental marvel he ever knew. It is said the young prodigy could recite pages of Shakespeare from memory at an age when the ordinary boy is learning his alphabet.

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In the same city where young Sidis was born we find the idiot. Did God create them both as they were born or did they come up to their present difference of mental equipment through a process of evolution that accounts for it all satisfactorily? If the theory of special creation is sound why did not the idiot get at least a little of the intellect that Sidis could so easily have spared? If they are the work of special creation it is impossible to find reason or justice in such terrible inequalities. But if reincarnation is God's method of creation the explanation of the difference between them becomes simple. Sidis is not only an old soul but evidently one who has worked hard in past lives, throwing off the lassitude of the dense bodies and evolving the power of will that enabled him to triumph over obstacles, conquering all the enemies of intellectual progress and thus earning the fine physical body and brain he now possesses. His present abilities are but the sum total of the energies he has put forth in the past.

The theory of special creation does not explain the facts of life. It lacks justice, it lacks harmony and it lacks consistency. It is not in accord with natural law. Nature knows no such thing as special creation. To believe in special creation is to ignore all scientific facts and principles. On the other hand reincarnation is in harmony with science and with natural law. Reincarnation is evolution and every kingdom of nature develops through evolution. The difference between the shriveled wild grain that struggles with the rock and soil for life enough to barely reproduce itself, and the plump wheat of the cultivated fields that feeds the world, is the work of evolution. The wild stalk produced the seed and from that seed came a better stalk. The better stalk produced a still better kernel and from that better kernel sprang a superior stalk to yield a higher grade of wheat than any of its predecessors. The stalk sprouts from the ground, matures, stores all its gain of growth within the seed and perishes. But from the seed springs its reincarnated form, to repeat the process that changes poor to good, good to better and better into best. And thus it is with the reincarnating soul. As the almost worthless grain through many seasons is slowly changed to perfect worth, the soul is by that same law of evolution slowly changed through many incarnations from the chaos of savage instincts to the law and order of the moral world. Each incarnation yields some improvement. As the seed sprouts within the darkness of the soil and, perishing there, attains its full results in the higher realm of sun and air, drawing from the soil that which, stored within the grain, gives power to reproduce its better self, so the soul strikes anchorage in the lower planes and draws from its varied experiences that which, transmuted after the body's death, gives the power to return with greater life.

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Attempts have been made to find some explanation of the mental and moral inequalities that exist at birth. In the earlier days of the study of evolution it was usually asserted that the human being inherits his mentality and morality from his parents. But even if that were true the injustice of one being born a genius and another a fool would remain. It is the fact of inequality that constitutes the injustice, and it is of no importance whether it comes about through heredity or otherwise. But as a matter of fact heredity is confined to the physical side of existence. As more and more is learned by observation the old theory of mental and moral heredity has lost ground until it can be said that it now has no recognition in the scientific world. Nobody is better qualified to speak upon the subject than those with practical experience. Dr. A. Ritter, of the Stanford University Children's Clinic, that has large numbers of defective children in charge, treating no less than sixteen hundred in a single year, says:

"As to the definite causes of the prevalence of defective types, I cannot speak with finality or assurance. I do not agree with social or educational doctrinaires who assign the causes definitely to liquor, poverty, infectious diseases, or other social or moral shortcomings. The greatest minds of the world are hesitant in theorizing about this. There are a complex of causes which explain many of these cases, but no generalization fits absolutely. We may find a case which is not traceable to any of these conditions—a case in which the antecedents would promise a perfectly normal child, and yet we are confronted with a defective child. On the other hand, bright, normal children, even children of superior intelligence sometimes spring from such conditions."^[L]

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A little reasoning about the facts concerning both genius and idiocy will make it clear that neither is inherited. If it were true that genius is inherited society would present a different appearance. There would be famous families of geniuses living in the world, in music, in poetry, in warfare, in invention, in art, if genius were inherited. The fact is that it is difficult to find even two geniuses in any family. The Caesars, Napoleons, Edisons, Lincolns, Wagners, Shakespeares, stand alone with neither great ancestors nor great descendants. We search in vain for great ancestors for such men; but if the theory of mental heredity were sound we should know their ancestors for precisely the same reason that we know them.

Heredity, then, does not explain whence genius comes; and if anybody had really traced genius from father, or grandfather, to son or grandson, we should still have no explanation of what genius is. We could then only regard it as the result of some strange chance; yet the scientist knows that laws of nature contain no such element. But the only reason why genius appears so

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incomprehensible is because we have not looked at it in the light of nature's truth. We have erroneously assumed that this is the only life we live on the physical plane, and therefore the time is too short for the evolution of genius. A man can become an expert in one lifetime but not a genius. But if we give him many incarnations to develop along certain lines he can become a genius of a given type. The soul that works strenuously at building up a certain faculty through many incarnations naturally develops qualities in the causal body that shine out brilliantly upon its return to a physical body and we have the genius. We evolve our mentality and morality, and there could be no justice in life if it were otherwise.

There is no element of chance in getting a new physical body in the next incarnation. The body is the material expression of the self. It is as much the product of the self as the rose is of the bush, the apple of the tree, or the tulip of the bulb. The musician can no more get a body suitable to the blacksmith than the rose bush can produce an apple. We do not get bodies by lottery, like destitute people drawing clothing by numbers which might result in grotesque misfits. We do not get bodies at all, we evolve them, and in each incarnation the new body expresses all the soul has come to be up to that point in its evolution. Such a view of life has a basis of absolute justice. Every soul gets exactly what it has earned. [149]

The common belief in Occidental civilization is that we live here for only sixty or seventy years and that then, when we die, we pass on to live eternally somewhere else, and that the whole of eternity, whether it is filled with pleasure or is horrible with pain, is made to depend on how we spent those few years of the physical life! Such a fate would be unfair and unjust. If a schoolboy is incorrigible for a term it would not be fair to condemn him to lose all opportunity of getting an education. We would give him another chance at the following term.

A little incident of disobedience from home life will illustrate the point involved. A quinine capsule was lying on the table. A three-year-old boy reached for it. His mother called across the room, "Don't eat that, dearie, it isn't candy." But in a spirit of reckless mischief he hurried it into his mouth and quickly chewed it up! It was a very disagreeable but salutary lesson for the little fellow. It is an example of nature's methods. She is always consistent, and has a balanced relationship between cause and effect. But suppose in this case we throw her consistency aside as those who believe that eternal results will follow temporal effects are obliged to do. An ordinary lifetime compared to eternity is somewhat like that instant of disobedience compared to eighty years, but the illustration is not adequate because eternity never ends. As nearly as the principle can be applied it would be by saying to the child, "Because you were disobedient for a second of time you shall taste quinine for eighty years!" If that punishment is injustice what must we call the infliction of an eternity of pain as the result of the errors committed in a lifetime? [150]

Any hypothesis of existence that does not take into consideration the welfare of humanity is a false hypothesis. What plan can better serve the common welfare than a chance to redeem a failure? When a prisoner is condemned for a crime we do not deprive him of opportunities. We give him every possible chance to improve his character. God cannot be less just or merciful than man. Rebirth is a new chance. Every incarnation is another opportunity.

If the popular idea of an eternal heaven and hell is sound, and there be few who find the "narrow way," the time will come when the majority of the race will have used their one opportunity of a brief lifetime, and have failed. If that were really true, it is easy to imagine what they would do with another opportunity if they had it! How long should opportunity be given? Just as long as it will be used, and to deprive anybody of it when he is eager to redeem past errors is to ignore the principles of human welfare. Therefore such a plan cannot be the true one. John J. Ingalls personified opportunity and wrote:

Master of human destinies am I!
Fame, Love and Fortune on my footsteps wait;
Cities and fields I walk; I penetrate
Deserts and seas remote, and passing by
Hovel and mart and palace, soon or late
I knock unbidden once at every gate.
If sleeping, awake; if feasting, rise before
I turn away. It is the hour of fate,
And they who follow me reach every state
Mortals desire, and conquer every foe
Save Death; but those who doubt or hesitate,
Condemned to failure, penury and woe,
Seek me in vain and uselessly implore;
I answer not and I return no more.

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That is true enough from one viewpoint and profitably emphasizes the importance of promptly acting when the time for action arrives. But there is another truth to be expressed on the subject and it is well done by Walter Malone, who says:

They do me wrong who say I come no more,
When once I knock and fail to find you in;
For every day I stand outside your door,
And bid you awake and rise to fight and win.
Wail not for precious chances passed away;
Weep not for golden ages on the wane;
Each night I burn the records of the day,
At sunrise every soul is born again.
Laugh like a boy at splendors that are sped;

To vanished joys be blind and deaf and dumb;
My judgments seal the dead past with its dead,
But never bind a moment yet to come.
Though deep in mire, wring not your hands and weep,
I lend my arm to all who say, "I can."

What a magnificent view of human evolution! No ultimate failure possible because there is always another chance. The failure of one incarnation made good by the sincere efforts of the next. All the faults and frailties—the shadow blots of the past—vanishing in the light of a higher wisdom that has been won. No endless hell, no eternal torment; not even the ghosts of vanished chances to haunt the mind; but only the insistent voice of immortal Opportunity, urging us to wake and rise to strive and win!

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FOOTNOTES:

[L] Interview in San Francisco Examiner, March 5, 1916.

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CHAPTER XI.

REBIRTH: ITS NECESSITY

There are apparently but three ways in which anybody has attempted to explain the origin of the race. If two of these are shown to be impossible we have no course open to us but to accept the one which remains. One of the three theories is that of the materialist. Another is the common belief that God created an original human pair and continues to create souls for babies. The third hypothesis is that of the evolution of the soul.

The materialist's position seems to be, briefly, that the forces of nature, with no directive intelligence, are sufficient to account for man as we see him; that a continuing consciousness in the human being is a delusion; that immortality is a vain dream and that humanity has neither a past nor a future. Yet the very facts of science to which the materialist appeals contradict such conclusions.

This materialistic belief regards the human body as a self-sufficient machine whose brain generates thought. But the savage has a completely evolved physical body with eyes, ears and other organs like our own. His brain under the microscope shows no trace of difference in its material constitution from the brain of civilized man. Indeed, his physical body is not only as complete a machine as ours but is likely to be materially sounder. Why, then, if the brain produces thought, does not this savage produce the thoughts of a philosopher? If there is no directing soul back of the brain, why the marvelous difference in the product of the two brains?

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Materialists go too far in the assumption that they can explain the phenomena of life. They can talk learnedly about it but they must stop short of the source of life. Everything about anatomy and physiology they know, but the life that flows through the human machine remains unexplained. They can trace the circulation of the blood from the heart through the arteries, from the arteries across to the veins, from the veins back to the heart, but the greatest mind the race has produced cannot say what makes the heart beat. Life has not been explained and cannot be explained from the materialist's viewpoint. Every human being is a miracle. A fingernail is a mystery of evolution. It is formed from the same food that makes the flesh and it will continue to be formed regardless of the variety or quality of the food. Why do certain particles become flesh or nails? Who can draw the division line between them? With marvelous instruments and wondrous skill science has explored and mapped and charted the "tabernacle of clay," but it cannot throw a single ray of light upon the intelligence that animates it.

Materialism fails sadly enough in that direction, but still worse as a satisfactory interpretation of the panorama of the life about us. It is a philosophy of the gloomiest fatalism. It holds that we simply chance to be that which we are; that we are what we are merely because of fortuitous chemical and mechanical combinations. Had the combinations chanced to be something different we should not be in existence. Chance is the king of the materialist's world.

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According to this theory all abilities are the gifts of nature and all lack of them is the blind award of chance. No credit whatever is due to anybody for what he is, nor can anybody be logically blamed for his deficiencies. All are like men who, with closed eyes, draw something from a bag under compulsion. It is not to the credit of one that he got a prize nor to the discredit of another that he drew a blank. This hypothesis holds that recently we were not and that presently we shall cease to be; that we appear by chance, live our brief period, suffer or enjoy as it may happen and then pass to the oblivion of eternal silence; that all the thought, all the toil and the striving, all the effort and endurance were for nothing, and accomplished nothing. Such a

philosophy will not long survive the progress of our age. It lacks the balance of nature's principle of conservation. It lacks the completeness of universal law. It lacks the element of justice that is enthroned in every human consciousness and without which life would be a meaningless mockery and the world a chaos of despair.

But the materialist's philosophy has no monopoly of bad points or undesirable beliefs. The old popular idea of a mechanical creation is equally at war with both fact and reason. That belief is that God created the world as men build houses, and added the human beings as men furnish their houses when built. It is the belief that He is still making souls as fast as bodies are being born in the world, that these souls begin their existence at birth, live here but one life and then pass on into either endless bliss or eternal pain. [156]

This idea differs from materialism in the matter of a governing intelligence and on immortality but it is remarkably like it in other ways. Like materialism it is fatalistic because it makes man the helpless subject of resistless power. It merely puts an intelligent force as first cause where the materialist postulates blind force.

The materialist says that all human characteristics are the gift of nature while according to the popular belief they are the gifts of God. In either case one class of human beings gets abilities that they have not earned and others get defects that they do not deserve. The intellectual man is favored without reason and the fool is handicapped without mercy. Some come into the world with salvation assured by being well born while others are foredoomed to failure. Predestination goes logically with such ideas.

Happily the world has long been growing away from the once wide-spread belief in predestination because it is too shocking to the modern sense of justice. But is the world at the same time catching the point that if there is but one life on earth and the soul is created at birth, then the very essence of predestination remains, because some are created with the wisdom to attain salvation and others are created without it?

If the soul has no pre-existence it can have no responsibility at the time of birth. Neither can it have any merit. One is born with a sound mind and moral insight. These qualities may lead to salvation but the man has done nothing to earn them. Another is born with cruel and vicious tendencies and poor intellect. He may therefore miss salvation, but if he had no pre-existence he can have done nothing to deserve such a start in life. If we are really here for the first time then justice can be done only by giving us equal equipment at the start and equal opportunities afterward. [157]

Think for a moment of the sweeping difference between human beings at birth. There is every degree of vice and virtue from the savage to the saint and every mental variation from the fool to the philosopher. If God really creates the soul at birth, then one is created wise and kind though he did nothing to earn it. Another is created vicious and depraved. He did nothing to deserve it. One is showered with natural gifts to which he is not justly entitled. Another is blighted with a stupidity he did nothing to incur; and we are asked to believe that God made them thus! Such a belief is contrary to reason and to justice.

It is easy to see why, in this old view of the relationship between God and man, salvation was to be by faith. It was impossible for a person to be saved by his merit because, if his qualities were given to him by God at birth, he had no merit. His very ability to comprehend spiritual truth and his moral strength to resist temptation, were conferred upon him, not earned by him. If this popular view is sound, human beings should be neither praised nor censured. They are simply human automata operated by such degree of mental and moral ability as God chose to assign to them. If this be true, genius should have no credit for its accomplishments, indolence no frown of disapproval, cowardice no lash of condemnation, tolerance no need of praise, cruelty no rebuke, virtue no applause and heroism no fame for its selfless sacrifice. And yet this absurd and illogical belief lingers in the minds of millions of people. It is believed because it always has been believed. [158]

If materialism is an impossible philosophy, then the popular belief that the soul is created at birth is also impossible. It is a theory that encumbers its belief in immortality with conditions that destroy justice and defy logic. That old form of belief has outlived its day. It was possible at any time only because there was too little information and, like the old belief that the world was flat, it must yield place to the newer knowledge. The truth of evolution is the staunchest friend of religion. It is the foundation on which may be built a scientific belief in a Supreme Being, a rational faith in immortality and a brotherhood of man that has a basis in nature itself. The very idea that was hastily thought to be destructive of a belief in God and heaven and immortality is rapidly becoming the most important witness to the truth of them all. While it is true that in the earliest days of evolution the most eminent scientists were agnostic, it is equally true that today the most eminent scientists of the world believe in the existence of the soul, and in its immortality, and base that belief upon scientific grounds.

What is the essence of the facts of evolution and how does it give evidence against materialism and for immortality? Evolution is an orderly unfolding from the single to the diversified, from the simple to the complex, in which process life evolves by passing from lower to higher forms and storing within itself the gist of the experiences gained in each. [159]

One of the vital facts that evolution establishes is that slow building is the order of creation. The horse is an example. He is traced backward with certainty to a small creature that resembles

him very little indeed. Ages were required to evolve the horse into his present intelligence and utility. Another profoundly important fact in evolution is the continuity of life from body to body. The butterfly is frequently used as an illustration, but the principle holds with all the higher order of insects like ants, flies and bees. In the metamorphosis of the caterpillar we have a phenomenon so common that most people have personally observed it. Watch, in imagination, its transformation that contradicts materialistic philosophy. The worm is a physical body occupied by an evolving life or intelligence. Its physical body perishes and becomes part of the dust of the street. The life enters the grave of the chrysalis. The scientist takes that chrysalis, packs it in an ice house and leaves it frozen for a number of years. Now a mere frost will kill either caterpillar or butterfly, but when the chrysalis is removed from the ice and brought into a higher temperature the triumphant life emerges in the form of the butterfly. This phenomenon proves that life does survive the loss of the body. The body of the caterpillar is dead and has turned to dust years ago, but the caterpillar that lived in it is not dead. It now lives again in the physical world in a physical body of a higher type.

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Here, in an order of existence almost infinitely below man, we have an individual life existing in a physical form, passing from it and, after a number of years, taking possession of another form and living in that. Who can admit such continuity of life for the insect and deny it for man? Can there be a deathless something in a worm and not in a human being? Even without the mass of physical evidence that exists upon the subject the logic of nature would lead us to confident conclusions. The knowledge of evolution which science has so far accumulated leads to four natural inferences. One is that man is immortal. Another is that he has, like all creatures, slowly evolved to what he now is. A third is that both life, and the forms it uses, are evolving together, and the fourth is that lower orders evolve into higher and continually higher ones. The human soul evolves from the savage to the saint—from animal instincts to the self-sacrifice of martyrs and heroes. We cannot escape the conclusion that the race has evolved, is evolving and will continue to evolve until mental and moral perfection has been attained.

If neither the theory of the materialist nor the popular notion that the soul is created at birth is satisfactory, we have only reincarnation left as a working hypothesis; and if we accept the evolution of the soul as a natural truth, then reincarnation becomes a necessity in explaining the known facts of life.

But there are some students of life who appear to refuse the hypothesis of reincarnation while wishing to accept the idea of the evolution of the soul. But how would that be possible? If the soul is evolving it is under the necessity of developing by the laws of growth. They were discussed in Chapter IX.

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Those who desire to put their ideas about the soul and its immortality into harmony with the facts of evolution sometimes ask why it would not be possible for the soul to leave the material plane forever at the death of the physical body and then pursue its evolution on higher planes. In the vast universe there must be opportunity for all possible development, it is argued.

But why go on into other regions when the lessons here have not been learned? That would be a violation of nature's law of the conservation of energy. The average human being is in the elementary grades, with scores of incarnations ahead of him before he will be in a position even to take advantage of his opportunities and thus make fairly rapid progress. To talk of going on to higher planes for further evolution is like proposing that a child shall leave the kindergarten and enter the university.

We are evolving along two lines, the mental and moral, and a little consideration of the matter will make clear two important points—that we have much to learn and that the physical plane is wonderfully arranged for our instruction. We have conditions here for developing mentality that do not exist on higher planes. The absolute necessity of procuring food is an example. Death is the penalty for failure to obtain it. Hunger was the earliest spur to action at the lowest level of evolution and even now at our high point of attainment it is one of the chief factors of racial activity. In providing the necessities of life and in gratifying our multitude of desires mentality is developed. Business and professional life rests upon these physical plane necessities and, engaged in solving the problems of civilization, the race evolves intellect. Such problems do not, of course, exist on higher planes.

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While the mentality is thus being pushed along in evolution by our material necessities, the heart qualities are developed by the family ties in a way that could not be done elsewhere. In the nature of things the entrance of the soul to the physical plane is attended with helplessness. From the beginning it must have material necessities or die, and yet it can do nothing in its new infant body. Again, as a rule, long before it leaves the physical plane old age has once more rendered it helpless. Thus every human being must depend on the assistance of others at two critical periods of each incarnation. The help it receives, in infancy and old age, it pays back to the race, in the care of both the helpless young and the helpless old, when it is in the vigor of mature physical life. It is obvious that such experience develops the qualities of sympathy and compassion as no phase of business life could. The relationship of parent and child, husband and wife, evolves the heart qualities in a way that would be impossible in the totally different environment of higher planes. Naturally enough, each plane has a specific work to do in the soul's evolution. We can no more learn in the highest planes the lessons the material world is designed to teach us than a pupil can acquire a knowledge of mathematics from his lessons in geography. Hence the necessity for a periodical return to this life until its experiences have developed in us the qualities we lack.

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Not only has each plane its special adaptability to particular needs of the soul in its evolution, but the two kinds of physical bodies—masculine and feminine—through which the soul functions, afford special advantages for acquiring the lessons of life. The soul on its home plane is, of course, sexless. Sex, as we know it, is a differentiation arising from the soul's expression on lower planes. All characteristics of the soul itself, like intelligence, love, or devotion, are common to both sexes.

The ego functioning through the masculine body has the opportunity of certain experiences that would be impossible in the feminine body, while, of course, the feminine form enables the ego to get experience that could not be known through the masculine body. A consideration of the widely different experiences of fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, will show how true this is. The lessons obtained in the masculine body are largely those of the head while in the feminine form they are lessons of the heart.

When the ego puts forth its energies and begins descent into lower planes for another incarnation it is apparently beginning a cycle of experience in which either mentality or spirituality shall be the dominant note for that incarnation, and probably for several others. If it is to evolve for the time being through those experiences related to objective activity, with intellect as the guiding factor, the masculine body can best serve the purpose. But if the dominant note is to be spirituality, rather than mentality and the soul is, for the time, moving along the line of the heart side—the subjective, the intuitive—then the feminine body is the better vehicle in which such experience can be obtained. But to say that mentality is the dominant factor of masculine incarnation does not at all mean that men have a monopoly of the reasoning faculty. Nor does the fact that other souls are being expressed through the feminine body mean that they have a fundamental spiritual advantage. Some women are better reasoners than some men, while some men are more spiritual than some women. What it does mean is that a certain ego can express intellect better through a masculine body and intuition better through a feminine body.

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Our ordinary language confirms the truth of the statement that men normally express more the head qualities and women more the heart qualities. We speak of men as being reasoners and of women as being intuitional and depending upon their impressions. The soul in the masculine body is for the time being getting experiences of the outer, objective activities. He is the home builder and protector, the bread winner, the battle fighter. The soul in the feminine body is, for the time, getting experience along the line of the inner, subjective life. She is the wife and mother, and her lessons are of the heart rather than the head.

As we study nature we are more and more impressed with her wonderful mechanism for the evolution of the soul. It soon becomes clear to the student that every individual is, in each incarnation, thrown into precisely the circumstances required for the greatest possible progress of that particular ego. If the qualities of initiative and courage, for example, are to be developed, the masculine body admirably serves the purpose, while if sympathy and compassion need stimulation the feminine form is wonderfully effective for that kind of progress. It requires little reasoning to see that the soul would not continue to incarnate in one sex indefinitely. It must develop all its inner qualities. Both intellect and compassion must reach perfect expression. Such a consummation can, of course, be best attained by alternating sex experiences. But here again there is wide latitude in the operation of the law. The rule seems to be that ordinarily there are not less than three nor more than seven successive incarnations in one sex, and then the ego begins to express itself through a body of the other sex. By that rule it would commonly be for a period of from a few hundred years to some thousands of years, that the ego expresses itself through one sex before it changes to the other. One case is mentioned by the occult investigators in which for about thirty thousand years a certain ego had expressed itself only through the masculine form. At least no trace of a feminine incarnation could be found during that time.

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The necessity for rebirth becomes clearer and clearer as we study the nature of the human being and the inherent divine qualities he is unfolding. Reincarnation is the method of evolution at the human level. Only by physical plane experience can man's potential powers be aroused and so tremendous is the evolutionary work to be done that only a mere fragment of it can be accomplished in an ordinary lifetime. The absolute necessity of many rebirths is obvious.

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CHAPTER XII.

WHY WE DO NOT REMEMBER

The loss of memory between incarnations and the failure to now recall any of our experiences previous to the present physical plane life has sometimes been cited as a negative kind of evidence against the hypothesis of rebirth. The point could not be made, however, by one who has studied the matter because close scrutiny will show that the loss of memory is a necessary part of reincarnation. The fact that we do not remember is in perfect harmony with the principles of evolution. Indeed, the close student of the subject would be very much surprised if we could normally remember, because he does not get far until he sees, not only why we do not remember

past incarnations but why we should not remember them.

The very nature of the evolutionary work to be done by reincarnation necessitates a sacrifice of memory. One useful purpose of the confinement of consciousness in matter, through the use of a physical body, is that it narrows the scope of consciousness and thereby increases its efficiency. The consciousness of the ego sweeps over a vast range, forward and backward, including all past incarnations. But the limitation of matter which compels consciousness to be expressed through a physical body, focuses the attention on the evolutionary work immediately in hand. The brain becomes the instrument of consciousness but also, fortunately, the limitation of consciousness. If there were not loss of memory our minds would now range over the adventures of thousands of years in the past. It would encompass a vast drama with countless loves and hates, of many lives filled with pathos and tragedy. To thus distract the mind from the present life would retard our progress. When one is alone and in a secluded place one can think better and accomplish more than when in the midst of turbulent scenes and throngs of people. When there is less to think about the thinking is more effective. It is necessary to restrict the consciousness and limit the mind to the present life in order to get the most satisfactory results. The same truth is embodied in that old saying that whoever is jack of all trades is master of none. Concentration alone can produce satisfactory results. If we would master the lessons of this life we must not take other lives within the field of consciousness. The very process of reincarnation is a coming out of the general into the particular, with the consequent narrowing of consciousness.

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We should keep in mind the fact that our true and permanent life is in the causal body, and on the mental plane, and that there, alone, is unbroken memory possible. The descent into matter in each incarnation is also beyond reach of the brain memory, of course. Getting new bodies is the working out of natural law even as instinct works in animals. The whole animal kingdom, lacking the reasoning power of man, nevertheless adapts means to ends with unerring accuracy and with a depth of wisdom that is beyond our comprehension. And so is human evolution directed by impelling forces that are unknown to our waking consciousness. But our waking consciousness is only a small part of our consciousness—that fragment of it that can be expressed through the physical brain. The physical brain is a limitation of consciousness, and therefore of memory, as certainly as a mountain range is a limitation of sight and prevents one's knowing what lies beyond it. In higher realms we do know our wider life and vaster consciousness that includes the memory of our past incarnations. But when we come downward into another incarnation it is as though we were descending in a narrow vale within mountain ranges that stand between us and the wider world. Memory is dependent on things not within the control of the will. Memory often fails to establish facts which we wish to recall. We know, for example, the name of a certain person. There is no doubt that we know it and yet it is impossible to remember it at will. Tomorrow it will flash upon us, but we cannot remember it now, try as we may. Now, if memory fails to produce its record even when we have a mental picture of just how that person looks, and know just where we have met him, it is certainly not remarkable that with no such immediate connection with our last incarnation we fail to recall it. It was perhaps in another part of the world, and in another civilization, and is separated from us by the long interval between incarnations. Of course memory likewise fails to produce that record. But all of our past experiences are within the soul, just as the records of all of the experiences of this life are in the mind whether we can connect them with the present moment or not.

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But it may be asked why it is that, if we do not remember events that have occurred in past lives and people we have seen before, we do not at least now have a knowledge of the facts previously familiar to us. What the soul gains from incarnation to incarnation is not concrete facts but something higher and far more valuable. It gains the essence of facts which gives the understanding of their true relationship; and this is the thing we call good judgment or common-sense. A man does not succeed in business because he knows a lot of facts, but because he knows what to do with the facts. An encyclopedia is full of facts but it cannot run a business. Every theorist and dreamer is loaded with facts. The successful man is the one with balance and judgment.

It might seem on first thought that one who has been a carpenter in a previous incarnation should have no need to learn the name and use of a saw, or one who has been a skillful penman to learn slowly to hold the pen and fashion the letters. But we must remember that the old soul is now breaking in a new physical instrument with which to express itself and that while it will be able to use all the skill it has previously evolved, its full expression must await the time when the new instrument has been brought into responsive action.

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The situation might be fairly illustrated by the case of a stenographer who is still using the original typewriter, in some remote corner of the earth, and who has not even seen or heard of any of the remarkable improvements made in such machines in the last thirty years. If his old machine were suddenly taken from him and a model of the present year were put in its place, it is obvious that he could at first make little use of it—not because he has no knowledge but because he must become accustomed to the new machine before he can express himself through it. It would have mechanism and appliances that he could not immediately manage. Let us imagine also that all the characters are in a foreign language which must be mastered before the machine can be used. But the difficulties are not great enough yet for a fair illustration. We must also suppose that it is a living thing, with moods and emotions, and that it must pass through stages of growth comparable to infancy and youth. Under these handicaps it would be certain that the stenographer would appear to have very little knowledge and to possess little skill. Yet as a matter of fact it is merely the conditions that temporarily prevent him from expressing his

wisdom and skill.

The gist of knowledge gained in the past represents skill that has no dependence whatever upon brain memory. If a man should suffer a lapse of memory, as sometimes happens, and wander about unable to give his name or place of residence, such loss of memory does not prevent him using any skill he may have evolved. If he is an athlete he may not know in what gymnasium he evolved his great strength, but he can use it just as effectively regardless of the absence of memory.

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One who has been a skillful penman brings all his skill to the new incarnation but of course the new body must be trained to hold the pen and form the letters. Every public school teacher knows that one child will quickly learn that and soon become a competent penman while another can by no possibility exhibit skill in that particular art. The reason is that one has previously evolved his skill and the other has not, and may not, for several more incarnations.

It is sometimes objected that by the hypothesis of reincarnation we are required to go over the same ground again and again and learn what we have previously learned. But the criticism has no foundation in fact. There is undoubtedly some necessary recapitulation in the early part of the incarnation, just as there may be in the early part of a school term. But in the main we are thrown into new conditions which are calculated to develop additional faculties. We return to the same material world but we find it with a higher form of civilization than when we were here before. Never before have we who are now here seen a civilization like this, with its age of iron and steam and electricity, with its marvelous opportunities for developing the mechanical faculty in human nature. And that is another bit of evidence of the beauty and utility of the evolutionary scheme. We come back always to greater opportunities than we have yet known.

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It is not only clear that the failure to remember the past has nothing to do with our ability to use the skill and wisdom we have previously evolved but it is equally obvious that it is the best of good fortune that we cannot remember the past. If we could do so that memory would keep alive the personal antagonisms of past reincarnations. Nobody will deny that we have plenty of them in this incarnation or that the world would be the better if we could bury some of the present antagonisms in a like oblivion. If all quarreling neighbors were to suddenly lose memory of their feuds it would be an undeniable advantage to everybody concerned.

Nature's wisdom in veiling the past from us can be understood by observing the pernicious effects of remembering too long the blunders people make in this incarnation. Take the case of a very young man who has charge of his employer's money and who, finding himself pressed for ready cash, makes the grave mistake of "borrowing" a hundred dollars without his employer's knowledge and consent. The young man really believes he is borrowing it and knows just where the money is to come from to replace it soon, and he thinks nobody but himself will ever know anything about it. But to his consternation the money that was due him in a few days cannot be collected in time and an unexpected examination of his books leads to his arrest for embezzlement. He is convicted, sent to prison for a year, and returns a marked man. Thoughtless society closes its doors against him. He seeks employment in vain. Nobody wants an ex-convict. He explains that he had no criminal intent and that he really was guilty of only an indiscretion and that he paid back the money later. But the world is too busy to listen. It sees only the court record, and that was against him. The public forgets, or never knows, the extenuating circumstances. But it never forgets two things—the verdict of guilty and the prison. The young man would almost give his life for a chance to wipe it all out, but it is impossible. It stands against him for life. But nature is wise. She does not permit our vicious traits to extend their injury too far. If we could remember from incarnation to incarnation that man's misfortune might afflict him for thousands of years. But by the wise plan of closing all accounts at the end of each incarnation the mischief of remembering the blunders of others comes to an end. In the next incarnation all start with clear records again.

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One of the objections that one sometimes hears against reincarnation is that it seems to separate us for long periods, if not forever, and that even when we meet those we have previously known and loved, there is no memory of the past. The answer to the first point is that the separation is wholly on the lower planes and that the time spent on the higher planes is often twenty times that given to the lower. Separation is, of course, unavoidable on the physical plane, even where people live together in the same home. The average man spends most of the day at his office and sleeps about eight hours during the twenty-four. He is really separated from his family most of the time. But there is no such separation on higher planes and there is spent most of the whole period of evolution. The second point—that we do not now have the pleasure of knowing that our friends are those we knew and loved before—is not an important one. What is really important is that we again have them. If the ties of affection have been strong between us in the past there will be instant friendship when we meet for the first time in this incarnation. Those with strong heart ties are certain to be drawn into very close association life after life. It has been observed through the investigations that egos have been husband and wife, or parent and child, again and again. The probability of such close relationships depends upon the strength of the ties of affection. But if such real bond between the souls is lacking the mere fact that they now have family relationships is no guarantee of such future intimate association. When two souls have strong ties arising out of past association the failure to remember that incarnation does not in the least weaken the ties. But it does mercifully hide the past contentions that are to be found in nearly all lives.

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The failure to remember previous incarnations will be more clearly understood if we now give

some thought to the fact that the personality here on the material plane is only a fragment of the whole consciousness of the soul. As we come down into lower planes from the mental world each grosser grade of matter through which the ego expresses itself is a limitation of consciousness. On the astral plane each of us, whatever he may be here, is more alive and enjoys an actual extension of consciousness. On the mental plane he has enormously greater wisdom than here, with a still further extension of consciousness that is quite beyond the present comprehension of the brain intelligence.

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To put it differently, the ego really does not come into incarnation at all. It merely sends outward a ray from itself—a mere fragment of itself, as a man might put his hand down into the water of a shallow stream to gather bits of ore from which gold can be obtained. So the ego puts a finger, only, down into denser matter to get the general experience that can be transmuted into the gold of wisdom and skill. That finger of the ego, that we know as the personality, gathers the experience and then it is withdrawn into the ego. During the incarnation the personality has been animated by only a little of the ego's vast intelligence and that is why it blunders so often. But, veiled in dense matter, not much of the ego's consciousness can reach it.

The relationship between the ego and the personality may be illustrated by that which exists between the brain consciousness and that of the finger-tip. The difference, of course, is great. The finger tip cannot see or hear or taste or smell. It is limited to one sense—touch. But it is a form of consciousness, and it can get experience and pass it on to the brain consciousness. A man may be addressing an audience and see some substance on the table before him. It may be sand or sugar. Without interrupting his lecture he can put down his finger and get at the truth about the matter. The finger-tip gets the information and passes it on to the brain consciousness. Meantime there has been no pause in the discourse. Not a phrase nor a word nor the shading of a thought has been missed. The intellectual life went on in its completeness while the ray of intelligence sent down in the finger-tip got and reported the fact as it was. Just so the life of the ego—the true self of each of us—goes forward on its home plane while the personality here gropes for its harvest of experience. Some of those experiences will be painful to the personality, and the event will seem tragic here, but it will be a passing incident to the ego. In the illustration just used the substance on the table may prove to be neither sand nor sugar, but tiny bits of glass. Some of the sharp points may penetrate the finger and pain follows. To the finger-tip consciousness it is a blinding flash of distress that is overwhelming. But to the brain consciousness it is a trivial incident. And thus it is with most of our painful experiences here. They do a useful work in our evolution and they are trifling incidents to the consciousness of the ego.

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The personality finishes its work and perishes, in the sense that it is drawn up and incorporated in the ego. Most people identify themselves so fully with the personality that its loss seems like a tragedy to them. But that feeling will trouble them no longer when the ego is understood to be the real self. We might say that the relationship between the ego and the personality is like that between man and child. Childhood will perish but only to be merged into manhood. When we look at that transformation from the viewpoint of the man it is quite satisfactory. But if looked at from the viewpoint of the child it may look appalling. If you should say to your son of three summers, "My child, the time will come when all these beautiful toys will be broken and lost and your little playmates will see you no more," you might cause him much distress. It would seem to his limited child consciousness nothing less than a tragic destruction of what makes life worth while. But when he reaches manhood he will look back with a smile to the trivial things of those early days. If there is something in his childhood of real, permanent value, it will persist in manhood. All the trivial and transient will have disappeared and he will be pleased that it is so, for manhood is the real life of the personality as the ego is the real self.

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As the memory of childhood lives in the brain of the man, so the memory of all the hundreds of incarnations persists in the causal body and is an eternal possession of the ego. When we are sufficiently evolved to raise the consciousness to the level of the causal body, while still living on the physical plane, as some people are now able to do, we shall thus temporarily recover the memory of past lives. When that time comes, however, the soul is sufficiently advanced to use such wider knowledge without injury to itself or others.

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CHAPTER XIII.

VICARIOUS ATONEMENT

Back of the old doctrine of vicarious atonement is a profound and beautiful natural truth, but it has been degraded into a teaching that is as selfish and brutal as it is false. The natural truth is the sacrifice of the solar Logos, or the deity of our system. The sacrifice consists of limiting Himself in the matter of manifested worlds and it is reflected in the sacrifice of the Christ and other great teachers who use their vast consciousness through a physical brain for the helping of

the world. Compared to the descent of such supermen into mundane spheres a mere physical death is a trifling sacrifice indeed.

The help that such great spiritual beings have given mankind is incalculable and altogether beyond what we are able to comprehend. But for such sacrifice the race would be very, very far below its present evolutionary level. But to assume that such sacrifices relieve man from the necessity of developing his spiritual nature or in any degree nullify his personal responsibility is false and dangerous doctrine. Nobody more than the theosophist pays to the Christ the tribute of the most reverent gratitude. He also holds with St. Paul that each must work out his own salvation. [182]

The belief in special creation arose in that period of our history when our ancestors knew little of nature. Modern science was then unborn and superstition filled the western world. Now that we do know the truths of nature, now that we know that creation is a continuous process that is still going on, it is time to abandon the old conceptions and bring religious beliefs and scientific principles into harmonious relationship.

Wherever it touches the practical affairs of life the old idea of special creation and special salvation fail to satisfy our sense of justice and of consistency. Intuitively we know that any belief that is not in harmony with the facts of life is a wrong belief. The idea of special creation is not only inconsistent with the facts as science has found them, but it does not give us a sound basis for moral development. Having started with the false idea of the special creation of the soul, which brings it into the world free from personal responsibility, it became a necessity to invent a special salvation to give any semblance of justice at all.

Now the vital point against this plan of salvation is that it denies the soul's personal responsibility and teaches that whatever the offenses against God and nature have been, they may be cancelled by the simple act of believing that another suffered and died in order that those sins might be forgiven. It is the pernicious doctrine that wrong doing by one can be set right by the sacrifice of another. It is simply astounding that such a belief could have survived the Middle Ages and should continue to find millions who accept it in these days of clearer thinking. But it seems that when people are taught a thing in childhood the mind accepts it then without reasoning and afterwards vaguely regards it as one of the established facts without thinking further of it at all. But upon reflection we see at once the impossibility of its being true. We hear of a lingering practice in a remote province of China, whereby a man convicted of a crime is permitted to hire a substitute to suffer the penalty in his stead. The law must have its victim and its supremacy must be upheld. We laugh at that and know well enough that punishing the unfortunate substitute, who sacrifices himself to obtain a sum of money that will provide for his family, cannot regenerate the offender. Indeed, we see clearly that his willingness to shift the responsibility for his crime upon another only sinks him farther into iniquity. The only person who can gain in moral strength is the one who makes the sacrifice. [183]

Let us suppose that that system of vicarious atonement for wrong doing were to be adopted generally. Then every murderer who had the means would escape the consequences of his crime. Every burglar who was successful enough to have the cash on hand could elude prison. Every pickpocket could hire a substitute to suffer for him and thus continue his criminal career. Every embezzler would have the money to purchase freedom. Every corruptionist would be safe. Every thief could laugh at the law. It would make a mockery of justice. It would place a premium upon crime and a handicap upon honesty and virtue. However bad the dishonest might be it would make them worse. It would necessarily lower the standard of their morality by shifting the burden of their sins to others. It would destroy personal responsibility, and personal responsibility is the basis of sound morals and the foundation of civilized society. [184]

Yet that is precisely the sort of thing that goes with the belief in special creation and special salvation—the teaching that we are not responsible for our sins and that by believing that another assumed them and died for us we can escape the results of our wrong doing and thus be saved. What are we to be saved from? From nothing but ourselves. From our selfishness, from our capacity to do evil, from our willingness to inflict pain, from our lack of sympathy with all suffering and from the heartlessness that is willing to let others suffer in order that we may escape. Salvation must necessarily mean capacity to enjoy heaven. The man who is willing to purchase bliss by the agony of another is unfit for heaven and could not recognize it if he were there. What do we think of a person here who shifts his sins upon another and while that other suffers he goes free and enjoys the fruits of his baseness?

A heaven that is populated with those who see in vicarious atonement a happy arrangement for letting them in pleasantly and easily would not be worth having. It would be a heaven of selfishness and that would be no heaven at all. A real heaven can be composed only of those who have eliminated selfishness; only of those who want to help others instead of trying to dodge the consequences of their own acts; only of those who are manly and womanly and generous and just and true. Nothing less than a recognition of personal responsibility can lead to a heaven like that. Yet the theory of special salvation ignores it, waves it aside—in fact denies it! [185]

Reincarnation represents personal responsibility and therefore absolute justice. It shows that, not merely in all the vast future, but also in this life and in every life, and all the time, our degree of happiness depends upon our present and past course. If reincarnation were generally understood it would necessarily raise the average of morality. It furnishes a deterrent for the evil doer and a tremendous incentive for the man who desires to obey natural law and be happy. It shows the one that there is no possible escape from evil deeds; that he must return life after life

to associations and environments determined by the good or the ill he has done; that he can no more escape from his evil deeds than he can escape from himself; that he must ultimately suffer in turn the pain of every blow and the humiliation of every insult he has inflicted upon others. It assures the man of good intentions and right desires that every good deed shall rise up in the future to bless him; that all whom he has helped shall become his helpers hereafter; that even his good intentions that failed in their purpose through mistaken judgment, shall bring him joy in the future.

What a splendid thing it is to know that every thought and act adds permanent value to the character; that all we learn in any life becomes an eternal possession; that we can add to our intellect, to our insight, to our compassion, to our wisdom, to our power, as certainly and definitely as a man can add to his bank account or permanent investments; that whatever we may be in this incarnation we can return again stronger and wiser and better.

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The hypothesis of reincarnation shows our inherent divinity and the method by which the latent becomes the actual. Instead of the ignoble belief that we can fling our sins upon another it makes personal responsibility the keynote of life. It is the ethics of self-help. It is the moral code of self-reliance. It is the religion of self-respect.

Think of the utility as well as of the common-sense of a scheme of salvation that really saves us because it evolves us; that never denies us a chance to retrieve an error; that gives us an opportunity to right every wrong; that brings us back life after life until all enemies have been changed to friends; until all accounts are closed and balanced; until all our powers have been evolved, until intellect has become genius; until sympathy has become compassion and the last moral battle has been fought and won.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE FORCES WE GENERATE

Every human being is constantly generating three classes of forces, and they determine the kind of life he will lead here, the degree of success or failure that will characterize it, and the state of his consciousness on the inner planes after the death of his physical body. The law of rebirth brings us back to incarnation, but it is the law of action and reaction under which we evolve while here.

The three classes of energies which we generate are those of thought, desire and action. They belong, in the order named, to the mental world, the astral world and the physical world. All people are constantly thinking and desiring and, with varying degrees of energy, are putting thought and desire into action. These forces sent out into the worlds of thought, emotion and action, produce certain reactions, or consequences, and to them the man is bound until justice is done and the soul has learned its evolutionary lesson.

That thought and desire are forces as certainly as electricity is, the student of the occult well knows, but the world is not quite yet at the point where the fact is generally accepted. That, however, is the history of all human progress. When Franklin began his experiments with electrical force almost nobody believed there was any such thing in existence. Yet today we use it to carry our messages, run our trains and drive our machinery. Had anybody predicted all that at the time of the first experiments he would have been considered extraordinarily foolish. What the world accepts or rejects at any particular time usually has very little to do with the facts. The general public can be expected to come trailing along, about a half century late, with its acceptance and approval. Thought is a force or telepathy and hypnotism would be impossible. Both have been scientifically demonstrated.

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The mental body grows by the process of thinking. The force generated in thinking reacts in the production of greater faculty for thinking, so that we literally create our mental abilities. The activities of thought change the mental body into a better and constantly better instrument through which the ego can express itself. But our thoughts also affect others and we thereby make ties with them that must work out sooner or later in associated experience.

Desires generate a kind of energy that plays a most important role in the drama of human evolution. The law operates to bring together the desirer and the object that aroused the desire. For the soul can only judge the wisdom of its desires by observing the result of gratifying them. Thus do we acquire discrimination. It is usually a strong desire nature that brings trouble of various kinds and yet the force of desire it is that pushes all evolution onward. Through experience the soul finally learns to control desire, to raise lower desires into higher ones and thus ultimately to attain non-attachment and liberation.

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Actions are the physical expression of thoughts and desires and, as we are constantly simultaneously thinking, desiring and acting, very complex results arise. In the multitudinous activities of life we set up relationships with other souls, some of the results of which reach far into the future. The average man, with no knowledge of the laws under which he is evolving, is

usually making both friends and foes for future incarnations and is often unwittingly laying up pain and sorrow for himself that a little occult knowledge would enable him to avoid. Every injury that he inflicts will return to him, though not necessarily in kind. Nature does not punish. She merely teaches and knows nothing of retaliations. Her great concern seems to be that all souls shall get on in evolution and when a lesson is learned her purpose appears to be accomplished.

The forces we generate in each incarnation shape and determine the next and succeeding ones. Our friends, our families, our business associates, our nation, are determined by what we have thought and felt and done in the past and by the lessons it is necessary we shall learn. Our wealth or poverty, our fame or obscurity, our strength or frailty, our intelligence or stupidity, our good or bad environment, our freedom or limitations, all grow out of the thoughts and emotions and acts in the past. From their consequences there is no possibility of escape. [190]

But that does not mean that we are the helpless slaves of fate from which there is no release. We who generated the forces can neutralize them. We can undo anything we have done. It only means that for a time we must work within the self-imposed limitations created by a wrong course in the past.

Those who are interested in the long-time discussion over free-will and determinism have often been impressed with the remarkably strong arguments that can be marshaled by each side to the controversy. Either side, when presented alone, appears to be conclusive. The explanation lies in the fact that each is right, but only to a certain point. Both free will and necessity are factors and when the theosophical viewpoint is understood the apparent contradiction disappears. We are temporarily bound, *but we did the binding*, by the desires we indulged and the emotions we freely harbored in the past.

The condition of temporary restraint in which we now find ourselves may be likened to that of a party of gold hunters who go into Alaska to locate mines. They are all aware that in that remote northern country navigation closes very early and that after the last boat leaves there is no possibility of getting out of that region until navigation opens again in the next season. Some of them are discreet and reach the landing in ample time. Others are careless. They continue their search for gold a little too long, and arrive at the river a day too late. The boat has sailed and they must become prisoners of the ice king. It's a great misfortune but they alone are responsible. They cannot escape from Alaska for many months but within Alaska they are absolutely free. They can build a cabin and either waste the time with idle games or seriously think and study. They are limited but free within the limitation, and the limitation itself was of their own making. It is precisely so with us in the environment of the present incarnation and with our various fortunes. We made them and, when the forces with which we did it are exhausted, we shall be free. Meantime we can do much toward modification and improvement. [191]

The reactions from the forces we generate naturally do us exact justice just because they *are* reactions. We reap precisely what we sow. The reaction may sometimes seem harsh but consideration of the matter from all points of view will show that mercy as well as justice is always a factor. Let us consider the method by which nature changes recklessness into caution. A man is careless, we will say, about lighting a cigar and throwing the burning match down wherever it may happen to fall. He may go on doing that a long time with no serious result, yet all careful people know that he is a source of danger. Some time ago a newspaper told the story of such a man, who passed along the street, lighted a cigaret and carelessly flung the flaming match from him. A nurse was passing with her charge in its tiny carriage. The match fell on some of the light, airy wraps of the infant and they burst into a blaze. Before the fire could be extinguished the child was so badly burned that it died the next day. [192]

The moment such a case is stated we realize the necessity of something that will cure the man of such fatal carelessness. He is a menace to the lives and property in his vicinity. No law, however, can be invoked. He had no criminal intent but he is none the less dangerous for that, as the incident proved. We are helpless, however, to prevent his continued carelessness. But nature is not helpless. Under the law of action and reaction he must reap as he has sown. It may be in the latter part of this incarnation, or it may be in a following one, but sooner or later his carelessness will react and he will lose his physical body in pain and distress and come to know personally just what his recklessness means. In the reaction, a part only of which is on the physical plane, he gets the experience that is necessary to set him right. The folly of his course is so driven in on his consciousness that he is changed from the careless man to the careful man. In no other way could his cure be brought about.

It may be said that if a misfortune comes to us as the result of our wrong thinking and acting in a past life we can now know nothing of its cause and therefore we cannot profit by the reaction. But while we do not know in the limited consciousness of the physical brain the soul does know and in the wider consciousness the lesson is registered.

The principles of justice are never violated in teaching the soul its evolutionary lessons. Nothing can come to a man that he does not merit and that which often looks like a misfortune is only the beneficent working of the law seen from an angle that makes it illusory. But, it may be objected, how does theosophy see "beneficent working of the law" in the burning of a theater where a score of people lose their lives, including several children? How can theosophy explain that? [193]

How can it be explained by those who hold that the soul is created at birth? If God really brings the soul into its original expression in an infant body, why does he throw it out again in a few

years, or even months? What can be the purpose? It would be difficult indeed to explain the death of children if the soul were created at birth. But let us look at it from the theosophical viewpoint. The child is an old soul with a young body. Hark back to the case of the man whose carelessness caused the death of the baby in its carriage. He, and others like him, are again in incarnation and in the burning theater they get the reaction of the unfortunate forces they have generated. But why so many in some catastrophes? it may be asked. A principle is not affected by the number involved. If we can see justice in the death of one person we can see justice in the death of a hundred. It is simply class instruction. People of a kind have been drawn together.

We should not forget that we see only a small fragment of any such case from the physical plane. We form an opinion, however, on that inadequate survey and are quick to declare our opinion of the justice or injustice involved. But our verdict depends wholly upon a viewpoint. Let us suppose, for example, that a man strolls down the street and that, as he turns a corner, he suddenly comes upon a little tragedy of life. A young man is lying on the ground, battered and bleeding, while two others stand over him. What would the average man, coming suddenly on the scene say? He would probably indignantly blurt out "The ruffians!" and he would be inclined to assist the man who was down. But let us suppose that he had been a moment earlier. He would then have been in time to turn around the corner with the other men and would have seen him rush upon a defenseless woman, push her down, snatch her purse and dash away, but, fortunately, in the direction of the men who assaulted and stopped him. Had the last arrival seen the entire affair he would have reversed his opinion and said that the thief got what he deserved. And so it is in our inadequate physical plane view of what we call a calamity. It may appear to involve an injustice, but only because we do not see the entire transaction.

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Those who study the occult laws that shape human destiny may learn to use them for their rapid progress and for insuring a comfortable, as well as spiritually profitable, life journey.

But before we can work successfully within the law we must know that the law really exists. Most people seem either to believe there is no law that will certainly bring them the results of their good or evil thoughts and acts or that if there is such a law they can in some way dodge it and escape the consequence, and so we see them go along through life always doing the selfish thing or the thoughtless thing. They misstate facts, they engage in gossip, they harbor evil thoughts, they have their enemies and hate them, they scheme to bring discomfort and humiliation upon those whom they dislike. And then, when the harvest from this misdirected energy is ripe and they are misled by the falsehoods of others to their loss and injury, when they fall into the company of schemers and are swindled, when a false story is started about them, when—through no fault of the moment—they are plunged into discomfort and humiliation, they merely call it so much bad luck and go blindly on with their generation of wrong forces that will in due time bring another enforced reaping of pain.

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There is a law that regulates the pleasure and pain of daily life as certainly as there is a law that guides the earth in its orbit about the sun. That law of action and reaction is just as constant, accurate and immutable as the law of gravity that keeps our feet upon the ground while we come and go and think nothing at all about it.

There is something almost terrifying in the immutability of all natural laws and their utterly impersonal aspect. They are the operation of forces which, in themselves, are not related to what we call good and bad. They simply are. The law of gravity will illustrate the point. It operates with no consideration whatever for character or motives. It holds all people, good and bad alike, firmly upon the earth while it whirls through space. If a saint and a fiend stumble over a precipice, it will hurl them both to the bottom with perfect impartiality. If the fiend, who may just have murdered a victim, is more cautious than the saint and avoids the precipice, the law has not favored him. He has merely reaped the reward of his alertness in spite of his bad morals. The saintly man may have come fresh from some deed of mercy but the law of gravity takes no account of that. When he stepped over the precipice, and was dashed to death, he paid the penalty of carelessness regardless of his benevolence. There is profound wisdom in the words "God is no respecter of persons," for, of course, all natural laws are but the expression of the divine will.

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But this immutability of natural law is not in the least terrifying when we come to look more closely at it. On the contrary it is within that very immutability that divine beneficence and compassion are hidden. It is only by the constancy of the changeless law that we can calculate with absolute certainty and surely attain the results at which we aim. It is because of the certainty that the doing of evil brings pain and the doing of good yields a return of happiness that we can control circumstances and determine destiny.

Why should there be such a law operating in the mental and moral realm? Because only thus can we evolve. We must not only change from ignorance to wisdom but from selfishness to compassion, from wrong doing to perfect harmlessness. How would that be possible without the law of cause and effect, without action and reaction which brings pleasure for righteousness and pain for evil deeds? Only under such a law can we learn what is the right and what is the wrong thing to do. If it is agreed that we are souls, that evolution is a fact, and that perfection is the goal of the human race, then the necessity for the law of action and reaction is as obvious as the reason for a law of gravity.

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The existence and operation of this law of cause and effect are set forth repeatedly in the Christian scriptures. "With what measures ye mete it to others it shall be measured to you," is

certainly explicit. In Proverbs^[M] we have this definite declaration: "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein, and he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him." Of course the language is figurative. No writer of common sense would assert that every time a workman digs a pit he shall tumble into it nor that whenever anybody rolls a stone it will roll back upon him! We dig pits in the moral world whenever we undermine the character of another with a false story, whether we originate it or merely repeat it, and into such a pit we shall ourselves fall, in the reaction of the law. We have loosened and set rolling the stones of envy and hatred and they shall return to crush us down to failure and humiliation in the reaction that follows. We have ignorantly generated evil forces under the law when we could have used it for our success and happiness.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged," is another statement of the law of action and reaction. It is not an assertion that we should not judge because we are not qualified nor because we may ignorantly wrong another with such a judgment. It is an explicit statement that the consequence of judging others is that we, in turn, shall be judged. If we criticize, we shall be criticized. If we condemn others for their faults and failures, we shall be condemned. If we are broad and tolerant and remain silent about the frailties of others we shall be tolerantly regarded by others. [198]

All of us who have studied the subject find in our daily lives the evidence of the truth of such Biblical declarations. We know perfectly well that anger provokes anger and that conciliation wins concessions, while retaliation keeps a feud alive. We know that retort calls out retort, while silence restores the peace. In these little things it is usually within the power of either party to the trouble to have peace instead of turmoil—just a matter of self control. But in the larger events it is not always so. They are not invariably within our immediate control because they are often the results of causes generated in the past which we can no longer modify. And this brings us to a wider view of this law of cause and effect.

If we look at the life history of an individual as it stretches out from birth to death it presents a remarkable record of events that appear to have no logical relationship to each other. In childhood, there may have been either great happiness or great sorrow and suffering regardless of the qualities of character we are considering, and there is nothing in the present life of the child to explain either. The child itself may be gentle and affectionate and yet it may be the recipient of gross abuse and cruel misunderstanding. In maturity we may find still greater mysteries. Invariably there are mingled successes and failures, pleasures and pains. But when we come to analyze them we fail to find a satisfactory reason for them. We see that the successes often arrive when they are not warranted by anything that was done to win them, and for the want of any rational explanation we call it "good luck." We also observe that sometimes failure after failure comes when the man is not only doing his very best but when all of his plans will stand the test of sound business procedure. Baffled again we throw logic to the winds and call it "bad luck." [199]

Luck is a word we use to conceal our ignorance and our inability to trace the working of the law. Suppose we were to ask a savage to explain how it is that a few minutes' time with the morning paper enables one to know what happened yesterday in London. He knows nothing of reporters and cables and presses. He cannot explain it. He cannot even comprehend it. But if he is a vain savage and does not wish to admit his ignorance he might solemnly assert that the reason we know is because we are lucky; and he would be using the word just as sensibly as we use it!

If by luck we mean chance, there is no such thing in this world. Chance means chaos and the absence of law. From the magnificent, orderly procession of a hundred million suns and their world systems that wheel majestically through space down to the very atom, with all of its electrons, the universe is a stupendous proclamation of the all-pervading presence of law. It is a mighty panorama of cause and effect. There is no such thing as chance. [200]

What then *is* good luck? We know that people do receive benefits which they apparently have not earned. There simply cannot be a result without a cause. They have earned it in other lives when the conditions did not permit immediate harvesting of the results of the good forces generated and Nature is paying the debt and making the balance of her books at a later period. It may be in the case of one that some specific act is attracting its reward, or it may be in the case of another that he is nearing the point in evolution where he no longer desires things for himself, only to discover that nature fairly flings her treasures at his feet. He has put himself in harmony with evolutionary law—with the divine plan, and nature withholds nothing.

When we eliminate chance, then, we are forced to seek the cause of unexplained good or bad fortune beyond the boundaries of this life because there is nothing else we can do. We have results to explain and we know they do not come from causes that belong to this life. They must of necessity arise from causes generated in a past life.

Now the moment we get away from the narrow view that we began existence when we were born, all the mysteries about us disappear and we can fall back on natural law and logically explain everything. Why does one person begin life with a good mind while another is born with small mental capacity? Because one worked hard at life's problems in past incarnations while the other led a butterfly existence and merely amused himself. Why does one move serenely through trying circumstances always maintaining a cheerful view of life while another loses control of his temper at the slightest annoyance and wears himself out with the trifling vexations of existence? Only because one has for a long period practiced self control while the other has never given a thought to the matter. Why is one so thoughtful of others that he wins universal love and [201]

admiration while another is so self centered that he makes no true friends at all? Again past experience explains it. The one has studied the laws of destiny and lived by them while the other has not yet even learned of their existence.

Putting aside the old belief that the soul is created at birth, and keeping in mind the newer and scientific view that we have all lived many lives before, all the difficulties and perplexities at once disappear. We are no longer puzzled because we find in a man's life some good fortune when he has apparently done nothing to deserve it, for we see that he must have set the forces in motion in a previous life which now culminate in this result. We are no longer mystified because apparent causeless misfortunes befall him for we know that in the nature of things he did generate the causes in the past. A single incarnation has the same relation to the whole of the soul's evolution that a single day has to one incarnation. As the days are separated by the nights and yet all the days are related by the acts which run through them, so the incarnations are separated by periods of rest in the heaven world and yet all the incarnations are related by the thoughts and acts running through them. What a man does in his youth affects his old age, and what we did in our last incarnation is affecting the present one. The one is no more remarkable than the other. As we mould old age by youth so we are shaping the coming incarnation by this one. Before we shall be able to see the utter reasonableness of the truth that what we are now is the result of our past we must have a clear understanding of the relationship between the soul and the body. The physical body in each incarnation is the material expression of the soul, of its moral power or weakness, of its wisdom or ignorance, of its purity or its grossness, just as one's face is, at each moment the expression of one's thought and emotion in physical matter. Every change of consciousness registers itself in matter. A man has emotions. He feels a thrill of joy and his face proclaims the fact. He becomes angry, and the change from joy to anger is registered in physical matter so that all who see his face are aware of the change in his consciousness, which they cannot see. These are passing changes like sunshine and shadow and they are obvious to all. But we know that as the years pass the constant influence of consciousness moulds even physical matter into permanent form. A soul of sunny disposition finally comes to have benevolent features while one of morose tendency as certainly has a face of settled gloom. Nobody can contact the soul of another with any physical sense we possess yet nobody has the slightest doubt of his ability to distinguish between a sunny, peaceful soul and a soul that is not in harmony with life. We know the difference only because consciousness moulds matter. But this is merely the surface indication. Consciousness is continually influencing matter and the major part of its work is not visible to us. What the consciousness is, the body becomes. Whether we are now brilliant or stupid, comely or deformed, is the result of the activities of consciousness, and the very grain of the flesh and the shape of the physical body are the registrations in matter of what we, the soul, thought and did in the past.

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Consider a specific thing like deformity and we shall begin to see just why and how it may have come about. If in a past life a person was guilty of deliberate cruelty to another, and on account of it suffered great mental and emotional distress afterward, it would be no remarkable thing if the mental images of the injuries inflicted on his victim are reproduced in himself. In idiocy we have apparently merely a distorted brain so that the consciousness cannot function through it. Might not that distortion of the physical brain easily be the result of violent reaction from cruelties in a past life? The consciousness that can be guilty of cruelty is seeing things crooked—out of proportion. Otherwise it could not be cruel. This distortion in consciousness must register a corresponding distortion in matter, for the body is the faithful and accurate reflection of that consciousness. It is just because the body is the true and exact expression of the consciousness in physical matter that the palmist and phrenologist can sometimes give us such remarkable delineations of character. The record is there in hand and head for those who can read it.

This broader outlook on the life journey, extending over a very long series of incarnations, gives us a wholly different view of the difficulties with which we have to contend and of the limitations which afflict us. It at once shows us that in the midst of apparent injustice there is really nothing but perfect justice for everybody; that all good fortune has been earned; that all bad fortune is deserved, and that each of us is, mentally and morally, what he has made himself. Masefield put it well when he wrote:

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All that I rightly think or do,
Or make or spoil or bless or blast,
Is curse or blessing justly due
For sloth or effort in the past.
My life's a statement of the sum
Of vice indulged or overcome.
And as I journey on the roads
I shall be helped and healed and blessed.
Dear words shall cheer, and be as goads
To urge to heights as yet unguessed.
My road shall be the road I made.
All that I gave shall be repaid.

Have we ever heard of a plan more just, of a truth more inspiring? It is surely a satisfying thought that every effort shall give increased power of intellect; that all kindly thought of others is a shield for our own protection in time of need; that every impulse of affection shall ripen into the love of comrades; that all noble thinking builds heroic character, with which we shall return, in some future time, to play a still noble part in the world of men.

FOOTNOTES:

[M] Proverbs, XXVI, 27.

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CHAPTER XV.

SUPERPHYSICAL EVOLUTION

If we accept the idea of evolution at all we cannot escape the conclusion that there is superphysical evolution. The belief that man is the highest intelligence in the universe, except God himself, would be utterly inconsistent with evolutionary facts and principles. Evolution is a continuous unfolding from within, and it is only the limitation of our senses that leads us to set limitations to it. The one great life of the universe expresses itself in myriad forms and at innumerable levels of development. One of those levels is humanity. But as certainly as our consciousness has evolved to its present stage it shall go on to higher ones.

Orderly gradation is clearly nature's method of expression. A continuous, unbroken line of life reaches downward from man. Its successive stages are seen in the animals, the reptiles, the insects and the microbes. Even the great kingdoms into which the biologist divides life fade into each other almost imperceptibly and it becomes difficult to say where the vegetable kingdom stops and the animal kingdom begins. Just as that continuous chain of life runs downward from man it must also rise above him until it merges in the Supreme Being. There must necessarily be the higher as well as the lower products of evolution. Man is merely one link in the evolutionary chain. The human level is the point where consciousness has become completely individualized and is capable of turning back upon itself and studying its own inner processes.

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The thought of Occidental civilization has been sadly fettered with materialism. It has scarcely dared to think beyond that which could be grasped with the hands. The physical senses were its outposts of investigation. What could not be seen or heard or felt had no existence for it. Modern science explored the material universe and perfected its methods until the vast panorama of worlds could be intimately studied, and its illimitable scope and colossal grandeur be somewhat comprehended. But there was no study of life comparable to the vast stretch of worlds; for material science had made the remarkable blunder of assuming that the last word on the nature of matter had been said. Then came the startling discoveries that revolutionized the accepted views of matter, that proved that the supposedly indivisible atom was a miniature universe, a tiny cosmos of force. The old theories about matter had to be thrown aside. They were as much out of date as the belief that the earth is flat. Stripped of technical terms of expression the revised view of matter is, substantially, that it is the lowest expression of life; and now modern science is turning tardy attention to a study of the life side of the universe. The moment that is done the sense of consistency and the law of correspondence compel us to postulate a gradation of intelligences rising above man as man does above the insects.

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The scientific mind instantly grasps the inherent reasonableness of the existence of superphysical beings. Writing on the subject of energy, Nicola Tesla says:

"We can conceive of organized beings living without nourishment and deriving all the energy they need for the performance of their life functions from the ambient medium.*** There may be *** individualized material systems of beings, perhaps of gaseous constitution, or composed of substance still more tenuous. In view of this possibility—nay, probability—we cannot apodictically deny the existence of organized beings on a planet merely because the conditions on the same are unsuitable for the existence of life as we conceive it. We cannot even, with positive assurance, assert that some of them might not be present here in this our world, in the very midst of us, for their constitution and life manifestation may be such that we are unable to perceive them."^[N]

Alfred Russell Wallace, who was called "the grand old man of science," wrote in one of his latest books:

"I think we have got to recognize that between man and the ultimate God there is an almost infinite multitude of beings working in the universe at large, at tasks as definite and important as any we have to perform on earth. I imagine that the universe is peopled with spirits—that is, with intelligent beings with powers and duties akin to our own, but vaster. I think there is a gradual ascent from man upward and onward."

While the scientist, still lacking the absolutely conclusive evidence, goes only to the point of asserting that it is reasonable and probable that supermen exist, the occultist asserts it as a fact within his personal knowledge.^[O] So we have the direct testimony of the occultists, the endorsement of the scientists as to its probability, and, perhaps the most important of all, the inherent reasonableness of the idea.

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The relationship of the supermen, or great spiritual hierarchy, to the human race is that of teachers, guardians and directors. They superintend human evolution. But this does not mean in the very least the relationship that is expressed in the term "spirit guides" so frequently use by the spiritualist. That is a totally different thing. They seem to imply that the "spirit guide" gives direct instructions or orders to the person known as a "medium." If we were all thus controlled and directed what would become of free will? Evolution can proceed only if we use our initiative in the affairs of life. If we were to be directed by the wisdom and will of others we would not evolve at all. We would be merely automata directed by others, and no matter how great they were we could never thus develop our judgment and self-reliance. It is not thus that the great spiritual hierarchy directs human evolution. It is, in part, by working with mankind en masse and bringing mental and moral forces to play upon them, thus stimulating latent spiritual forces from within. It is also by directly, or indirectly placing ideals instead of commands before the race. In another direction it is actual superintendence, or administration, or teaching, in a way that does not interfere with one's initiative or will. If the soul is to evolve it must have liberty—even the freedom to make mistakes.

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It is sometimes asked why, if the supermen exist, those who are in incarnation do not come out into the world and give us ocular evidence of the fact. It is pointed out that they could speedily convince the world by a display of superphysical force. But they are probably not in the least interested in convincing anybody of their existence. They *are* interested in raising the general level of morality, of course, but such an exhibition would not make people morally better. The work of the supermen can best be done from higher planes than the physical. As for the very small number of the supermen who take physical bodies to better do their special work, they can best accomplish it from secluded places; and if they sometimes have reason to come out into the seething vibrations of our modern civilization it is easy to understand that they would not be conspicuously different from other men, to the ordinary observer.

It is from the spiritual hierarchy that come all the religions of the world. There the question may arise, "Then why do they differ so greatly?" Because the peoples to whom they are given differ greatly. The difference of temperament and viewpoint between the Orient and the Occident is enormous. We are evolving along the outer, the objective, and our civilization represents the material conquest of nature. They are evolving the inner, the subjective. In the Orient the common trend of conversation is philosophical, just as in the Occident it is commercial. Such different types of mind require somewhat different statements of ethics, but the fundamental principles of all religions are identical.

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When a new era in human evolution begins a World Teacher comes into voluntary incarnation and founds a religion that is suited to the requirements of the new era. Humanity is never left to grope along alone. All that it can comprehend and utilize is taught it in the various religions. World Teachers, the Christs and saviours of the race, have been appearing at propitious times since humanity began existence.

Most readers will probably agree that a World Teacher known as the Christ did come and found a religion nearly two thousand years ago. Why do they think so? They reply that God so loved the world that he sent his Son, the Christ, to bring it light and life. If that is true how can we avoid the conclusion that He, or his predecessors, must have come many a time before? The belief that He came but once is consistent only with the erroneous notion that Genesis is history instead of allegory, and that the earth is about six thousand years old! Science has not determined its age but we know that it is very old, indeed. Many eminent scientists have made rough estimates, taking into consideration all that we have learned from astronomy, geology and archeology. Phillips, the geologist, basing his calculations upon the time required for the depositions of the stratified rocks, put the minimum age at thirty-eight million years and the maximum age at ninety-six million years. Sir George Darwin, basing his calculation wholly upon astronomical data, puts the earth's age at a minimum of fifty-six million years. Joly arrived at his estimate by a calculation of the time required to produce the sodium content of the ocean, and concluded that the age of the earth is between eighty million and one hundred million years. Sollas is said to have made careful study of the matter and he finds the minimum to be eighty million, and the maximum age to be one hundred and fifty million years. But perhaps the most exhaustive study of the matter, and that made by the use of the later scientific knowledge, was by Bosler, of the French scientists. He bases his calculations upon the radio-activity of rocks and arrives at a minimum earth age of seven hundred and ten millions of years. Thus it will be observed that as our knowledge grows the estimated age of the earth increases.

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In the face of such facts what becomes of the assertion that God so loved the world that he sent His Son to help ignorant humanity about two thousand years ago—but never before? What about the hundreds of millions of human beings who lived and died before that time? Did He care nothing for them? Did He give his attention to humanity for a period of only two thousand years and neglect it for millions of years? Two thousand years, compared to the age of the earth, is less than an hour in the ordinary life of a man. Does anybody believe that God, in his great compassion, sent just one World Teacher for that brief period? What would we say of a father who gave one hour of his whole life to his child and neglected him absolutely before and after that? Countless millions of the people who lived and died prior to the coming of the Christ were very much like ourselves. They belonged to ancient civilizations that often surpassed our own in many desirable characteristics. They were educated and cultured in their time and fashion. They were fathers and sons and mothers and daughters and husbands and wives, with the same kind of heart ties that we have. What of them? Were they permitted to grope in the moral wilderness

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without a Teacher or a ray of light? Of course the idea is preposterous. If God so loved the world that He sent his Son two thousand years ago He sent Him, or some predecessor, very many times before. By the same token He will come again. The only logical escape from such a conclusion is in the materialist's belief that He never came at all.

All religions crystalize, become materialized, and lose their spiritual significance. That is precisely what has happened to the various great religions of the modern world, including Christianity. It is no longer the dynamic thing in the lives of the people it once was. That's why a world war was possible. The fault is not with the teachings of the Christ. The trouble is that the world has not lived by them. We need a restatement of the old teachings in the terms of modern life that shall again make it a living force in the lives of men. It is when the World Teacher is most needed that he comes; and when has the need been greater than now? The world war has demonstrated the failure of so-called Christian civilization. We have seen the highest type of that civilization revert to the law of the jungle, deliberately disregard the usages of civilized warfare, and commit atrocities that would shame barbarians. We surely need no further proof that the Christian religion has not accomplished all that the spiritual hierarchy had a right to hope for, and that the coming of the Christ again is a necessity. [213]

But the spiritual hierarchy sends its great ambassadors only when the time is propitious, only when the world is ready to listen. Perhaps such an event can never be predicted in terms of time, but only in those of conditions. When the strength of the nations is spent, when the slain totals appalling numbers, when few homes of high or low degree are without their terrible sacrifice, when the heart of the race is filled with anguish, when famine and disease have done their awful work, and humanity fully realizes what the reaction from greed, lust, cruelty and revenge actually means, the world will be ready to listen as it never listened before, and after that we may reasonably expect the Christ to again appear to re-proclaim the ancient truth in terms of modern life.

The supermen are not myths nor figments of imagination. They are as natural and comprehensive as human beings. In the regular order of evolution we shall reach their level and join their ranks while younger humanities shall attain our present estate. As the supermen rose we, too, shall rise. Our past has been evolution's night. Our present is its dawn. Our future shall be its perfect day. Think of that night from which we have emerged—a chaos of contending forces, a world in which might was the measure of right, a civilization of scepter and sword, of baron and serf, of master and slave. That, we have left behind us. Think of the grey dawn that our civilization has reached—the dawn of a public conscience, of individual liberty, of collective welfare, of the sacredness of life, but with armed force still dominant, with war the arbiter of national destiny, with industrial slavery still lingering, with conflict between the higher aspirations and the lower desires still raging—a world of selfishness masked by civilized usage, a world of venerated cruelty and refined brutality. In all that we now live. But think of the coming results of evolution!—an era in which love shall replace force, when saber and cannon shall be unknown, when selfish desires shall be transmuted into noble service, when, finally, we shall finish the painful period of human evolution and join the spiritual hierarchy to direct the faltering steps of a younger race. [214]

FOOTNOTES:

- [N] "The Conservation of Energy," Nicola Tesla, Century Magazine, June 1900.
[O] An Outline of Theosophy, C. W. Leadbeater, pp. 6-12.

Transcriber's Note:

The following corrections were made:

- [p. 6](#): pretention to pretension (no pretension is made)
- [p. 12](#): An to In (In another aspect it is a religion.)
- [p. 12](#): theosophy to theosophy (While theosophy is distinctly a science)
- [p. 13](#): discusion to discussion (A detailed discussion of such methods)
- [p. 16](#): nevertheelss to nevertheless (is nevertheless just that relationship)
- [p. 17](#): explicilt to explicit (is certainly very explicit)
- [p. 19](#): period to semi-colon (who's true to man;)
- [p. 34](#): communicating to communicating (dead man who is communicating?)
- [p. 35](#): extra 'the' removed (more convincing than the evidence)
- [p. 46-47](#): envelopes to envelops (because it envelops it)
- [p. 63](#): oftens to often (often requires death)
- [p. 74](#): reproduces to reproduces (exactly reproduces emotion)
- [p. 82](#): consciouness to consciousness (finally loses consciousness)
- [p. 83](#): of to or (or by cleverly combining)
- [p. 86](#): strenghtend to strengthened (strengthened and vivified)
- [p. 89](#): slight to sight (has not lost sight of us)
- [p. 91](#): communciate to communicate (had to communicate with him)

- [p. 91](#): communcation to communication (subject of communication)
- [p. 92](#): communciate to communicate (desires to communicate)
- [p. 93](#): influnces to influences (sensitive to psychic influences)
- [p. 94](#): persist to persists (who persists in occupying)
- [p. 95](#): confidenty to confidently (will confidently assert himself)
- [p. 96](#): close quote added (What can I do?"
- [p. 103](#): missing comma added (While we do not yet know a great deal about life, science)
- [p. 105](#): perect to perfect (perfect agreement)
- [p. 109](#): extra 'and' removed (new and undeveloped)
- [p. 115](#): thoughtul to thoughtful (a thoughtful matron)
- [p. 117](#): methematical to mathematical (a mathematical problem)
- [p. 120](#): If to It (It often puzzles)
- [p. 121](#): from to form (highest possible form)
- [p. 124](#): missing apostrophe added (of nations' condemned prisoners)
- [p. 128](#): extra 'to' removed (civilization today could arise)
- [p. 129](#): two erroneously reversed lines corrected (consciousness. The young quails of this season come / they are attached to the same group-soul, or source of)
- [p. 138](#): crminal to criminal (a noted criminal)
- [p. 142](#): possessing to possessing (we find others possessing)
- [p. 146](#): blockquote formatted to match others in text
- [p. 158](#): meed to need (no need of praise)
- [p. 181](#): incalcuable to incalculable (is incalculable and altogether beyond)
- [p. 185](#): responsibilty to responsibility (personal responsibility and therefore)
- [p. 191](#): hapen to happen (may happen to fall)
- [p. 191-192](#): extinguished to extinguished (Before the fire could be extinguished)
- [p. 193](#): beneficent to beneficent ("beneficent working of the law")
- [p. 193](#): phsical to physical (from the physical plane)
- [p. 195](#): mistate to misstate (misstate facts)
- [p. 196](#): atain to attain (and surely attain)
- [p. 203](#): idocy to idiocy (In idiocy we have)
- [p. 204](#): Maesfield to Masefield (Masefield put it well)
- [p. 204](#): blest to blessed (I shall be helped and healed and blessed.)
- [p. 207](#): appodictically to apodictically (cannot apodictically deny)
- [p. 209](#): superman to supermen (small number of the supermen)
- [p. 209](#): it to is (it is easy to understand)
- [p. 211](#): calculations to calculations (He bases his calculations upon)
- [p. 212](#): chrystalize to crystalize (All religions crystalize)
- [p. 213](#): ambassadors to ambassadors (sends its great ambassadors)

Irregularities in hyphenation (e.g. wide-spread vs. widespread, class-room vs. classroom) and variant spellings (e.g. cigaret) have not been corrected.

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