

THE SHRINE *of* WISDOM

VOL. XXVI. NO. 102

WINTER SOLSTICE 1944

EMERSON ON THOMAS TAYLOR AND THE PLATONISTS

Emerson was unquestionably greatly influenced by Plato and the Platonists; all who study his writings with care agree on this point. Much of his thought is pure Platonism, adapted to the needs of those for whom he wrote and to whom he lectured: in fact he belongs to the Neoplatonic Succession.

It is not perhaps very generally known that Emerson made his first Greek contact through the translations of Thomas Taylor (1758-1835). The two were contemporaries, for Emerson was born in 1803 when Thomas Taylor was forty-five, and Taylor entered upon his larger life when Emerson was thirty-two.

There is a possibility that Emerson may actually have met Thomas Taylor, for he paid his first visit to England in 1833, when, it is recorded, he contacted Coleridge, Wordsworth and Carlyle.

In *English Traits*,* Emerson, describing his visit to Wordsworth, writes:

‘We talked of English national character. I told him it was not creditable that no one in all the country knew anything of Thomas Taylor, the Platonist, while in every American library his translations are to be found. I said if Plato’s *Republic* were published in England as a new book to-day, do you think it would find any readers?—he confessed, it would not: “And yet,” he added, after a pause, with that complacency which never deserts a true born Englishman, “and yet we have embodied it all.”’

From the foregoing, it looks as if Wordsworth himself was not very familiar with Thomas Taylor’s translations, not to

* Chapter XVII, p. 280. Riverside Edition.

mention his original works. Emerson, however, was deeply appreciative of Taylor's greatness, and lost no opportunity of acknowledging his indebtedness to his inspiration.

In his essay on Plato in *Representative Men*,* Emerson ranks Thomas Taylor with the Immortals.

'Platonists! the Alexandrians, a constellation of genius; the Elizabethans, no less; Sir Thomas More, Henry More, John Hales, John Smith, Lord Bacon, Jeremy Taylor, Ralph Cudworth, Sydenham, Thomas Taylor, Marcilius Ficinus and Picus Mirandola.'

And this is company no better than he deserves.

Emerson was not only familiar with 'T. T's.' larger works, but also with those smaller volumes of which only a very few copies were printed. In *Society and Solitude*, in the essay on 'Books,'† he writes as follows:

'If any one who has read with interest the *Isis and Osiris* of Plutarch should then read a chapter called *Providence* by Synesius, translated into English by Thomas Taylor, he will find it one of the majestic remains of literature, and, like one walking in the noblest of temples, will conceive new gratitude to his fellow men, and a new estimate of their nobility. The imaginative scholar will find few stimulants to his brain like these writers.'

It is good to find appreciation such as this. Thomas Taylor did not see it himself, for it was not written until 1870, after his death, but it would have delighted his soul, for such appreciation of his beloved Neoplatonists was rare in his day.

In Emerson's *Journal*, begun when he was only sixteen years of age and continued until he was seventy, we find many references to Thomas Taylor and his translations.

Could he show greater enthusiasm than in the following entry?‡

'It is curious that Thomas Taylor, the Platonist, is really a better man of imagination, a better poet, than any writer between Milton and Wordsworth. He is a poet with a poet's life and aims.'

Thomas Taylor has been named a 'Gentile Priest,' and Emerson recognizes his devotion, and his zeal for the spiritual reality of Greek religion and philosophy, as is shown in another entry in his *Journal*:§

* Riverside Edition, p. 42.

† Riverside Edition, p. 193.

‡ *Journal*, Vol. VII, p. 361.

§ Vol. X, p. 185.

‘Thomas Taylor would have preferred, to all meeting-houses and churches, to have restored the old native service of the temples on whose ruins these had been constructed.’

This comment also throws an interesting side-light on the merging of the old dispensation into the new; on the survival of churches with circular churchyards which were once the worshipping-places of the Druids in ancient days. Similarly, we might reasonably say that the thoughts and devotions of Plato and the Neoplatonists blossom again in the writings of Thomas Taylor and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

There are passages in the writings of Thomas Taylor which so impress Emerson that he copies them into his *Journal* as a source of future inspiration. This *Journal* is a quarry from which he extracts material for his Lectures and Essays. Often we find thoughts from this source worked into writings of a much later date.

The following significant passage from Thomas Taylor’s General Introduction to his Work of Plato (Vol. I., p. lxxix) is to be found in the *Journal* for 1844, Vol. VI, p. 509.

‘I conduct the reader through novel and solitary paths—solitary indeed, they must be, since they have been unfrequented from the reign of the Emperor Justinian to the present time; and novel, doubtless, to readers of every description, and particularly to those who have been nursed, as it were, in the bosom of matter, the pupils of *experiment*, darlings of sense, and legitimate descendants of the earth-born race that warred on the Olympian Gods.’

There is also another entry which follows the foregoing:*

‘These are they, in Taylor’s mind, “whose whole life is a sleep, a transmigration from dream to dream like men passing from bed to bed.” He contrasts ever the knowledge of experiment with that of abstract Science: the former is the cause of a mighty calamity to the soul, extinguishing her principal and brightest eye, the knowledge of divinity. One makes piety, the other atheism. There can be no other remedy for this enormous evil than the philosophy of Plato.

Then follows Taylor’s rich apostrophes to the stupid and experimental—“Abandon, then, ye grovelling souls” . . .’

And a further note:

‘Thomas Taylor died at Walworth, near London, November 1, 1835, aged seventy-seven. He was born in London in 1758 and learned the rudiments of Latin and Greek at St. Paul’s School. He

* *Journal*, Vol. VI, p. 510.

translated Aristotle, Plato, Proclus, Plotinus, Pausanias, Iamblichus, Porphyry.

Emerson on Proclus

'When I read Proclus, I am astonished at the vigor and breadth of his performance. Here is no epileptic, modern muse with short breath and short flight, but Atlantic strength, everywhere equal to itself, and dares great attempts because of the life with which it is filled.' (*Journal*, Vol. VII, p. 262.)

It is obvious that Emerson is greatly impressed by Proclus. He is thrilled by him, and he leaps to an instantaneous appreciation of his greatness. We know also that it was Thomas Taylor's translation of Proclus which he studied with such enthusiasm and spiritual kinship.

He continually quotes jewels in his *Journal* (Vol. VII, p. 516):

'Intellect is a god through a light which is more ancient than intellectual light and intellect itself.' (Proclus, *Theology of Plato*, Vol. I, p. 115. T. T's. translation.)

And again, *Journal*, Vol. VIII, p. 92:

'Knowledge subsists according to the nature of that which knows, and not according to the nature of that which is known.' (Proclus, *Theology of Plato*, Vol. II.)

Emerson becomes lyrical in his praise of Proclus, as in the following (*Journal*, Vol. VI, p. 159):

'Such a sense as dwells in these purple deeps of Proclus transforms every page into a slab of marble, and the book seems monumental. They suggest what magnificent dreams and projects. They show what literature should be. Rarely, rarely, does the Imagination awake; he alone knows Astronomy and Geology, the laws of Chemistry and Animation. He, the Imagination, knows why the plain or meadow of Space is strewn with these flowers we call suns, moons, and stars: why the great Deep is adorned with animals, with men and Gods; for in every word he speaks he rides on them as the horses of thought.'

In his Second Series of Essays in *Nominalist and Realist* Emerson informs us of the manner in which he reads Proclus:

'I read Proclus, and sometimes Plato, as I might read a dictionary, for a mechanical help to the fancy and imagination. I read for lustres, as if one should use a fine picture in a chromatic experiment for its rich colours. 'Tis not Proclus, but a piece of nature and fate that

I explore. It is a greater joy to see the author's author, than himself.' (Riverside Edition, p. 222.)

To 'read for lustres', that is, for illumination. To read for splendour and the radiance of beauty—what a valuable suggestion. All this Emerson found in Proclus, and we too can discover these same treasures if we read him with the awakened eye of the soul.

In the *Journal* (Vol. VI, p. 375) Emerson tells us another reason for reading Proclus:

'I read Proclus for my opium; it excites my imagination to let sail before me the pleasing and grand forms of Gods and dæmons and dæmonical men. I hear rumors rife among the most ancient Gods, of Azonic Gods who are itinerants, of dæmons with fulgid eyes, of the unenvying and exuberant will of the Gods; the Aquatic Gods, the Plains of Truth, the meadows, the nutriment of the Gods, the paternal port, and all the rest of the Platonic rhetoric quoted as household words. By all these and so many brave words I am filled with hilarity and spring, my heart dances, my sight is quickened. I behold shining relations between all beings, and I am impelled to write and almost to sing. I think one would grow handsome who read Proclus much and well.'

And again (*Journal*, Vol. VI, p. 213):

'I read the *Timaeus* in these days, but I am never sufficiently in a sacred and holiday health for the task. The man must be equal to the book. A man does not know how fine a morning he wants until he goes to read Plato and Proclus.'

Emerson, when he mentions the *Timaeus*, probably has in mind Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus* in T. T's translation.

In the *Journal* (Vol. VII, p. 7) he records:

'Proclus. I not only do not think that he has his equal among contemporary writers, but I do not know men sufficiently athletic to read him.

The writings of these Platonists abound in personification. Every abstract idea, every element, every agent in nature or in thought, is strongly presented as a God, in this most poetic philosophy, so that the universe is filled with august and exciting images. It is imaginative and not anatomical. It is stimulating.

The soul is intellect in capacity but life in energy.' (Proclus, in *Timeo*, Vol. II, p. 448, T. T's translation.)

'The parts of us are more properly of wholes, and of things above us, than they are our property.' (Vol. II, p. 435.)

As a last quotation on Proclus from the *Journal* (Vol. VI, p. 200) the following will serve as an inspiring conclusion to this section:

'My daily life is miscellaneous enough, but when I read Plato or Proclus, or, without Plato, when I ascend to thought, I do not at once arrive at satisfaction, as when I drink being thirsty, or go to the fire being cold; no; I am only apprized at first of my vicinity to a new and most bright region of life.'

Emerson on Plotinus

The following extracts give Emerson's opinion of Plotinus, and record quotations of especial interest to him:

'It is worth recording that Plotinus said, "Of the Unity of God, nothing can be predicated, neither being, nor essence, nor life, for it is above all these." Grand it is to recognize the truth of this and of every one of that class of truths which are *necessary*. Thus, "Design proves a designer," "Like must know like," or "the same can only be known by the same," out of which come the propositions in ethics "God without can only be known by God within," and "the scriptures can be explained by that spirit which dictated them," and a thousand sayings more which have a *quasi* truth instantly to the ear, the real truth of which is this elementary fact in all, "like must know like." It would be well for every mind to collect with care every truth of this kind he may meet, and make a catalogue of the "necessary truths." They are scanned and approved by the Reason far above the understanding. They are the last facts by which we approach metaphysically to God.' (*Journal*, Vol. II, p. 357.)

'Plotinus said as follows: "The animal life is æriform and must be supplied with air. The eye is soliform and must be supplied with sun. The soul is truth-like and must be fed with truth."' (*Journal*, Vol. II, p. 323.)

'Plotinus did not hastily disclose to every one the syllogistic necessities which were latent in his discourse.

"I endeavour to show," says Porphyry, "that intellections are external to intellect."

(The following are all from Plotinus.)

"All the Gods are venerable and beautiful, and their beauty is immense."

"Nothing that is truly beautiful externally, is internally deformed." *Of Intellect*. "It is ours when we use it, but not ours when we do not use it."

"Necessity is in intellect, but persuasion in soul."

"Intellect is not at all in want of another life, or of other things."

“God is not external to any one, but is present with all things, though they are ignorant that He is so.” (*Journal*, Vol. VIII, p. 451.)

‘Is it not a reason and a topic for discoursing that the soul is not admired? Let me say with Plotinus, “Since, therefore, you admire soul in another thing, admire yourself.” Admire the world, and admire the more true world of which this is an image.’ (*Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 306.)

“‘The purified soul will fear nothing,” said Plotinus.’ (*Journal*, Vol. VIII, p. 310.)

Emerson on the Trismegisti

‘When at long intervals we turn over the abstruse pages (of the Trismegisti) wonderful seems the calm and grand air of these few, these grand spiritual Lords who have walked the world. . . . This band of grandees, Hermes, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Plato, Plotinus, Olympiodorus, Proclus, Synesius and the rest, have somewhat so vast in their logic, so primary in their thinking, that it seems antecedent to all the ordinary distinctions of rhetoric and literature, and to be at once poetry and music and dancing and astronomy and mathematics. I am present at the sowing of the seed of the world. With a geometry of sunbeams the soul lays the foundations of nature. The truth and grandeur of their thought is proved by its scope and applicability, for it commands the entire schedule and inventory of things for its illustration.’ (Essays First Series, Works Vol. II, Riverside Edition, *Intellect*, p. 322.)

Emerson on The Life of Pythagoras by Iamblichus, translated by Thomas Taylor

‘I read with joy the Life of Pythagoras by Iamblichus; and the use of certain melodies to awaken in the disciple now purity, now valor, now gentleness. That *Life* is itself such a melody, and proper to these holy offices. Especially I admire the patience and longanimity of the problem of the novice. His countenance, his gait, his manners, diet, conversation, associates, employments were all explored and watched; then the long discipline, the long silence was imposed, the new and vast doctrines taught, and then his vivacity and capability of virtue explored again. If all failed, then his property (otherwise made common) was restored to him, a tomb built to his memory, and he was thenceforward spoken of and regarded by the school as *dead*. The long patience of this fugitive world is itself an affecting argument of the eternity of soul, affirms the faith of those who thus greatly slight our swift almanacs. He who treats human beings as centennial, millennial natures, convinces me of his faith. . . . Yet how much I admire their use of music as a medicine. But for me, with deaf ears, Order and Self-control are the “melodies” which I should

use to mitigate and tranquilize the ferocity of my animal and foreign elements.' (*Journal*, Vol. V, p. 522.)

'Pythagoras deserves his fame with scholars, because we never heard the severity of literary discipline but from him. The severity of military discipline is familiar, and is justified by men's easy belief in the reality of the values it subserves. Severity of mechanical toil we understand—seven years' apprenticeship, and twelve hours a day. But literary toil—so few men have literary faculty, that those few are not sustained by the expectation and loyalty of the community, and held to the most severe of disciplines proper to the highest arts. In law is severity of teaching.

Plato, what a school he had! What wealth of perception in Plotinus, Proclus, Iamblichus, Porphyry, Synesius.' (*Journal*, Vol. VIII, p. 474.)

In reading the foregoing extracts we are able to discover something of Emerson's background, and to appreciate in what manner and indeed how truly he belongs to the Platonic Succession.

Appreciation is a great art. To recognize greatness in the writers of the past implies some measure of greatness in the beholder.

Emerson saw the profundity of Thomas Taylor at a time when he was almost unknown. Few men have laboured so diligently and so ardently and with such meagre recognition as Thomas Taylor, but as he himself often wrote, his work was primarily for posterity, and it is only now, over a hundred years after his death, that his remarkable achievement is beginning to be appreciated.

As for the Neoplatonists, the Trismegisti, they, for many years to come perhaps, will still remain 'for the few'; but Emerson made a valuable contribution towards the enlarging of that circle.

SEED THOUGHT

Blessed are we who hate not those who hate us :
Who among men full of hate continue void of hate.

—*Dhammapada*

BALDUR THE BEAUTIFUL

The story of the Divine Son who is slain and consigned to the underworld is found in most mythologies expressed in different forms. The Norse version has a peculiar idiom and characteristic beauty of its own which justifies its association with the better known ones of Greece, Egypt, and other lands. It is a well established fact that such related myths did not arise altogether independently, but were often carried across the continents with the movements of peoples, and the elements of the Northern myths undoubtedly travelled north-westwards across Europe, eventually, after taking their distinctive Norse form, being brought to the Scandinavian colonies in Iceland, where most of them were recorded in the form in which they have come down to us today. Therefore they have a close affinity with the old Teutonic mythology. Many of them are obvious fusions of portions of various older myths.

This does not mean however that the Norse is merely a distorted survival of earlier systems, and unworthy of investigation, for every people sees the same universal truths from the angle of its own particular mode of approach, and uses the elements to hand surviving from previous mythologies, but recombining them in a unique manner. Thus every system of mythology should be interpreted on its own merits, however obvious it may seem that the characters and adventures duplicate those of older systems, for the distinctive contribution of each race lies in its original thought and is expressed in the particular arrangement and significance of the common elements of mythology. Otherwise, if only entirely original myths were deemed valid, none that exist would be of use, for the prototypes are lost in the prehistoric past.

The chief source of Northern myths is the Poetic or Elder Edda, reputedly compiled by Saemund the Wise (1056-1133), but not discovered by students until the seventeenth century. These poems were evidently composed for the use of a people well acquainted with the myths themselves, and therefore do not always clearly and fully relate them. Many of the passages and references are extremely obscure, so it is very fortunate that

we have the Prose or Younger Edda, attributed to Snorri Sturluson and written about 1218, by which to supplement and check the knowledge contained in the Elder Edda. The Prose Edda may be called a commentary and paraphrase of the older work, conjoining, linking-up, elucidating, and adding to it. Although written at a later date, this work was known some considerable time before the discovery of the Poetic Edda and is presented in the form of a consecutive story, in contrast to the latter, which is a collection of poems of varying antiquity and value, originally composed for recital, and transmitted orally.

The Norse Gods are of different grades of dignity, or "races", but those Deities which are chiefly described in the Eddas are the Æsir, the family of Odin, consisting of his sons and their respective wives. Baldur was his second and favourite son, and is portrayed as the most beautiful of them all. Snorri tells us in the Prose Edda that so fair and dazzling was he in form and feature that rays of light seemed to issue from him, and the whitest of all plants is called Baldur's Brow after the beauty of his hair. He was said to be the mildest, wisest, and most eloquent of the Æsir, and yet possessed the attribute of pronouncing judgements that could never be altered. He was evidently regarded as a champion of the weak, for his mother Frigg, when annoyed by Loki, declared that :

If a son like Baldur were by me now
 Here in Aegir's hall
 From the sons of the Gods thou shouldst not go forth
 Till thy fierceness in fight were tried.

The heavenly mansion in which Baldur dwelt, and where nothing evil or unclean could enter, was named Breithablik (Broad Blink or "wide-shining"). He had a son, Forseti, of whom we are told nothing, save that he "sets all strife at end" by settling disputes to the satisfaction of every party.

The myth relates that Baldur the Good informed his fellow Æsir that he had been tormented by terrible dreams which indicated that his life was in great peril. It was decided to conjure all things to avert from him the threatened danger, and accordingly his mother Frigg exacted an oath from fire, water, iron, and all other metals; from stones, earths, diseases, beasts, birds, poisons, and creeping things that none of them would do harm to Baldur.

Satisfied that nothing could harm him, it became a favourite sport and a mode of honouring Baldur for the Æsir to use him as a target for darts, swords, stones, and battleaxes. But the sight of such immunity from harm vexed Loki, the son of Farbauti and Laufey, who, assuming the shape of a woman, went to Frigg and learned from her of the oath exacted from all things except the mistletoe, which grew on the eastern side of Odin's hall, Valhalla, and was regarded as too young and feeble to be a danger. He hastened to the place and, resuming his own shape, cut a twig of the plant with which he repaired to the assemblage of the Gods at their sports. Observing one of them, Hoth, standing apart unable through blindness to participate in the game, Loki insinuated to him that he also should join in honouring Baldur and persuaded him to take the twig of mistletoe and allow Loki to direct his aim. The missile pierced Baldur's body, which fell lifeless on the ground, to the horror of all the Gods, who were only restrained from wreaking their vengeance on the assassin through respect for the sacred place. Odin was especially shocked, for he foresaw the dire results which must follow for the Æsir, and immediately begot another son, Vali, by Rind in Vestrsalir (the Western Hall) to avenge the crime. It is related that Vali, when one day old, slew Hoth.

Frigg called for a volunteer to ride to Hel in search of Baldur and offer Hela, its Goddess, a ransom for his return to Asgarth, a duty which was undertaken by another son of Odin, Hermoth, "the nimble", who set off on the journey riding Odin's horse Sleipnir, while the remaining Æsir took the body to the sea-shore and placed it upon Baldur's ship Hringhorn, the largest in the world, for the funeral pyre. But they were unable to launch the ship and so sent to Jotunheim, the world of the Giants, for the giantess Hyrrokin, who came mounted on a wolf with twisted serpents for a bridle. As soon as she alighted Odin ordered four berserkir to hold her steed fast, which they could only do by throwing it to the ground. The giantess launched the boat with a single thrust of such violence that fire sparkled from the rollers and the earth shook—which so enraged Thor that only the interference of the other Æsir prevented him from breaking her skull with his hammer.

At the lighting of the funeral pyre Baldur's widow Nanna, daughter of Nep, was overcome with grief, her heart broke and her body was laid beside that of her husband. Then Thor stood up and hallowed the pyre with his hammer Mjollnir, and during the ceremony kicked into the fire a dwarf named Nitur who was running before his feet. Baldur's horse was also committed to the flames. Odin whispered into the ear of his dead son certain words which have never been disclosed, and threw into the fire his gold ring Draupnir ("Dropper"), made by the dwarfs, which thereafter acquired the property of producing every ninth night eight rings of equal weight. Among those present at the funeral ceremony were Odin, his wife Frigg, his Valkyrie and Ravens, Freyr, Heimdall, Freyja, the Frostgiants and Mountaingiants.

Meanwhile Hermoth rode for nine days and nights through dark glens until he reached the river Gjøl where, crossing it by a bridge covered with glittering gold, he was challenged by the maiden Mogdudur, who said that in crossing the bridge he had shaken it more than had five bands of dead persons on the previous day, and told him that Baldur had already passed that way. Riding on northwards, he came to the barred gates of Hel, which his horse cleared with a bound, and arrived at the palace to find Baldur installed in the seat of honour.

Hermoth spent the night in his company and on the morrow besought Hela to allow Baldur to return with him. Declaring that it could now be tested whether Baldur was so greatly beloved as was said, Hela replied, "If therefore all things in the world, both living and lifeless, weep for him, then shall he return to the Æsir; but if any one thing speak against him or refuse to weep, he shall be kept in Hel."

Hermoth hastened back to Asgarth bearing the ring Draupnir which Baldur sent as a keepsake to Odin, and the Gods dispatched messengers throughout the world begging all things to weep for Baldur. The living and the dead readily complied, but when the messengers were returning overjoyed with their success they met an old hag named Thankt sitting in a cavern, who refused, saying:

Nought quick or dead
By man's son gain I
Let Hela hold what's hers.

It was strongly suspected that the hag was Loki, indeed in one of the poems he appears to confess to it:

Mine is the blame that Baldur no more
Thou seest ride home to the hall.

Thus Baldur the Good was doomed to remain in the underworld, to the constant grief of the Gods of Asgarth, and Loki's activities caused evils to be let loose upon the earth.

There the Baldur myth ends, although we are told later that after all the Gods except Vidar and Vali had been destroyed in the final battle of Ragnarok Baldur and his blind brother Hoth both returned to Asgarth:

Then fields unsown bear ripened fruit,
All ill grow better and Baldur comes back;
Baldur and Hoth dwell in Hropt's* battle-hall
And the mighty Gods. Would ye know yet more?

Suggested Interpretation

The interpretations given below deal with some of the principal features of the myth only, and are intended to suggest certain lines of thought to readers which they may develop in various directions.

Two suggestions have been advanced for the derivation of the name Baldur, one being related to the Scotch *bale*, "fire", and the other to the English *bold*; and Frigg, according to Grimm, is derived from a root meaning "the Free, the Beauteous, the Winsome".

The name of Baldur's son Forseti means literally "the fore-seated", denoting the judge. Grimm gives the significance of Nanna as "to dare". Hringhorn, Baldur's ship, means "ringed or annulated horn"; Hermoth is derived from two words meaning "an army or multitude" and "courage". The etymology of Hoth is very doubtful: Grimm suggests that it means "war" or "combat". Hoth is described as blind but extremely strong.

Two derivatives have been suggested for Loki, both of which are significant. The first is "flame or light", possibly more particularly a "smothered flame"; the second is "to shut", related to our word "lock".

* Hropt is one of Odin's many names.

Laufey is literally "frondiferous isle"; and Hyrrokin "smoky fire" or "fire in utter darkness". Gjol is probably derived from a root meaning "sonorous, fulgid"; and Mogdudur from two words signifying "warlike mind".

There are obvious resemblances between the story of Baldur and those of Osiris, Dionysus, Prometheus, and others, all of which symbolize the Divine Incarnation. Baldur's characteristics are purity, beauty, wisdom, light, and perfective activity. He is both Divine and human. As Divine he is the son of Odin and dwells in the heaven-mansions with the Æsir (Gods). In his human aspect he represents the spirit in man which, as participated by all human souls, is mystically said to be slain or split-up. Thus he is the spirit that "groaneth to be delivered", the inner promptings of which urge man to strive towards the perfection he is ultimately to attain. The liberation of spirit from bondage to corporeal existence or "Hel", and its restoration to its true home can only come when "all things weep for Baldur" and mankind directs its activities to that end.

Baldur may also be regarded as that aspect of the Divine Wisdom, inherited by all men as sons of God, which is the means of the redemption, upliftment, and perfection of mankind.

Hoth symbolizes the powerful impulse to manifest which causes Baldur to descend into the objective realms.

But since spiritual and rational natures operate in corporeal natures through the natural, irrational principle, Hoth, who in his objective aspect signifies this principle, must also descend. Therefore the immediate response of Odin to the killing of Baldur is indicative of the Providential manifestation of this principle, for Vali, who is a good archer, may be said to represent the controlling power which directs energies to their proper objects. Vali slays Hoth on the first day of his life.

Forseti, "the judge", the son of Baldur, symbolizes justice, and the peace by which it is followed:

There most of his days does Forseti dwell,
And sets all strife at end.

It is significant that after Baldur's death he "is installed in the seat of honour" in Hel.

The words which have never been disclosed, whispered by Odin into the ear of Baldur, and his gift of the ring made of

pure gold which possessed the power to reproduce itself eight-fold during every ninth night, are suggestive of the conferring of Divine powers. It is of special interest that the ring is returned by Baldur to Odin to be kept in his Divine care, signifying that spirit, symbolized by the golden ring and its circular form, ever abides in the supernal realms.

The sea represents the world of nature and generation; Baldur's ship Hringhorn ("ringed horn") symbolizes his complete natural vehicle, and the giantess Hyrrokin the cosmic forces inherent in the manifested world.

Loki is usually regarded as signifying evil, for he is described as constantly provoking strife. But another side of his character is given in the myths in accordance with which he works with and for the Æsir. He is both ingenious and cunning, qualities pertaining to the mind in its objective aspect: the former when working in conjunction with higher principles and the latter when operating according to lower, particular, and natural things.

Loki, therefore, may be considered as a principle which causes differentiation and multiplicity: the principle in man which gives him independence, but when exercised inordinately leads to selfishness and rebellion against law and order. This independence is suggested by the name of Loki's mother, Laufey, which means primitive vegetation on an island—an independent centre of life.

Myths which symbolize the Divine incarnation and the manifestation of spirit are almost invariably tragic in character, and introduce war, death, and apparent evil, which represent the progression of Divine power into the objective field of operation. Without the Divine manifestation in the world objective existence would be impossible and man would be unable to attain liberation and perfection.

It is significant that after Ragnarok both Hoth and Baldur return to a "new earth" where "fields unsown bear ripened fruit" on the plain of Ida, where are the holy thrones of the Gods.

THE DIVINE NAMES*

BY DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

Chapter IV continued

Again, there is no evil in bodies. For deformity and disease are a deficiency of form and a lack of order. And this is not wholly evil, but a lesser good, for were there to be a complete loss of beauty, form, and order, the body itself would be gone.

But it is evident that the body is not the cause of evil to the soul, since evil exists and exerts influence without body, as in dæmons. But evil to minds and souls and bodies is this: a weakness and falling away from the good estate that is proper to them.

Nor is the often-repeated saying true, that evil is inherent in matter as matter. For to matter also is imparted order, beauty, and form. But if matter, being without these, has in its own essence neither quality nor form, how can matter produce anything, since it has only the power of receiving impressions?

How, indeed, can matter be evil? For if it has no being at all it is neither good nor evil; but if it in some way is, and all that is is from the Good, matter also will be from the Good.

And either the Good produces evil, in which case evil, in so far as it is brought forth by the Good, is good; or the good is itself produced by evil, in which case the good, as coming from evil, is evil; or there are two primary principles which themselves are suspended from another unitive source.

And if it be said that matter is necessary for the completion of the whole universe, how can matter be evil? For it is one thing to be evil and another thing to be necessary. Again, how does He Who is Good produce anything from evil? Or how is anything evil to which the good is necessary? For evil flees the nature of the good. And how does matter, if it is evil, generate and nourish natural things? For evil, as such, neither generates nor nourishes nor wholly produces nor preserves anything.

* For previous section see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 96 to 101.

But if they say that matter does not produce wickedness in souls, but tempts to wickedness, how can this be true when many of them look to the Good? For how could this be if matter were tempting them entirely to evil? The evil in souls, therefore, is not from matter, but from an inordinate and discordant movement. But if they say that this is entirely the result of matter and that this unstable matter is necessary for things that are unable to establish themselves, how is evil necessary, or the necessary an evil?

Nor is the saying true that privation fights against the Good by its own power. For a complete privation is entirely powerless and the partial privation has its power not in virtue of its privation, but in so far as the privation is not complete. For so long as privation of good is partial, it is not yet an evil, but when it is total, the nature even of evil has completely disappeared.

To sum up, the Good comes from the One Universal Cause and evil from the many particular deficiencies. God knows evil under the form of good, and with Him the causes of evil are powers capable of producing good. But if evil is eternal and creates and subsists and acts, whence has it these attributes? Is it from the Good? Or from the evil by the action of the Good, or from another cause, through both?

Everything in nature comes from a definite cause; but if evil is without a cause and is indefinite, it is not according to nature; for among natural things there is nothing contrary to nature, just as in the sphere of art there is no place for that which is not made by art. Can the soul, therefore, be the cause of evil as fire is of heat, and does it fill with evil everything to which it comes near? Or is the nature of the soul itself good, but in its energies is it sometimes in one condition, sometimes in the other? If its subsistence is essentially evil, whence has it that subsistence? Or does it come from the Good Cause which creates all things? But if it is from this, how is the soul essentially evil? For all things born of that Cause are good. But if it is evil through its energies, even this is not unalterable, or whence come the virtues, unless the soul comes into being in the form of goodness? Therefore it remains that evil is a weakness and a falling away from the good.

The One is the Cause of all good things. If evil is contrary

to good, there are many causes of evil. The efficient causes of evil, however, are not reasons and powers, but impotence and weakness and the disproportionate mingling of dissimilar elements. For evil things are not stable and forever the same, but are indeterminate and indefinite, borne along in various things, all indeterminate. But the Good is the Source, Principle, and End of all things, even of evil things; for all things, both good and evil, serve the purpose of the Good, for we do even evil things with a desire for the good (since no one acts with a view to his own evil). Hence evil is without a substantial basis and has a pseudo-existence, being brought into existence for the sake of the good, and not from itself.

Evil can be said to be brought into being only accidentally: through another existence and not from a principle of its own. Hence that which is done appears to be right because it aims at a certain good, yet in reality it is not right because we regard as good something which is not good. Clearly, then, that which is desired is one thing and that which results is another. Evil, therefore, is a straying from the path—from intention, nature, cause, principle, end, bound, purpose, and subsistence. Thus evil is also deficiency, weakness, disproportion, failure, a lack of purpose, of beauty, of life, of intelligence, unreasonable, imperfect, unstable, without cause, indefinite, unproductive, inactive, impotent, disordered, unbalanced, indeterminate, dark, unsubstantial, having in itself no kind of subsistence whatsoever.

How, then, can evil have any power at all through mixture with the Good? For that which is without any part in the Good is nothing and has no power. And if the Good is a reality and desirable and powerful and active, how can that which is the opposite of good, since it is without essence, purpose, power, or energy, have any power against it? Only because the same things are not evil in the same manner and relation to all things. In a dæmon, evil is to be contrary to the likeness of intellectual goodness; in the soul, to be contrary to reason; in body, to be contrary to nature.

How can there be any evil if there is Providence? Only because evil in itself has no being, nor is it in existing things and nothing which has being is without Providence, for evil is nothing unless it is mingled with the principle of Good. And if there is nothing in the world which is unmingled with

good, and evil is a privation of good, and nothing in the universe is entirely destitute of the Good, then Divine Providence is in all things and nothing can escape It. For even the things which are brought about by evils are used for the benefit, collective or individual, of themselves or others by Providential Goodness which supplies the needs of every individual being. Wherefore we will not heed the false saying of the many that Providence should lead us to virtue against our will, for it is not providential to destroy nature; but It is providential in this: that It preserves the nature of each particular thing, providing for the needs of the self-moved as moving themselves, both for the whole and for individuals, according to their needs and in the measure that each nature can receive the providential benefits which are given to all according to their capacity by the universal and manifold Providential Goodness.

Those whom the Scriptures call conscious wrong-doers are feeble in their application of knowledge and in the practice of goodness. And those of whom it is said that knowing the good, they do it not, have heard the Word, but are weak in their faith and activity in the Good. And some are unwilling to know in order to do good, such is the perversion and weakness of their will. And in general evil, as we have often said, is weakness and impotence and deficiency of knowledge or, at least, of applied knowledge, or of faith, or of aspiration, or of activity directed towards the Good.

Yet someone may say that weakness should not be punished, but on the contrary, should be pardoned. This statement might be true were the power not given, but if power is bestowed by the Good Who, as the Scriptures say, gives freely to all things whatever is needful, we must not commend deficiency or perversion, or flight, or falling away from the good which is proper to us.

But these considerations have been sufficiently dealt with by us according to our ability in the treatise *Concerning Justice and Divine Judgment*, a sacred work throughout which the truth of the Scriptures has overthrown those sophistical arguments as being irrational assertions made unjustly and falsely against God.

We have now, to the best of our power, adequately celebrated the Good as perfectly admirable, as the Principle and End of

all, as embracing all things, as Giver of form to all beings, as the Cause of all that is good, but of nothing evil, as absolute Providence and Goodness, transcending all things that are and are not, and turning to good all evil and the privation of Itself, as desired, sought, and loved by all and as having every attribute that has been truly, as I think, set forth in this chapter.

(To be continued)

JEWELS

“How are we God’s sons? by having one nature with Him. But any realization of this, of being God’s sons, is subjective not objective knowledge. The inner consciousness strikes down to the very essence of the soul. Not that it is the soul itself, but it is rooted and is in a measure the life of the soul, her intellectual life, the life, that is, wherein a man is born God’s son, born into the eternal life, for this knowledge is a-temporal, unextended, without *here* and without *now*.” —*Eckhart*.

“It is true joy when the soul assembled in her inmost self becomes aware of a power, of a place in her from which God is never missing, wherein the Heavenly Father is begetting His Son without ceasing. When the soul is aware of and alive in this, then from this place divine joy flows into the soul.

“Now the question, can any of the soul powers go on working while the Father is speaking His eternal Word supernaturally into the soul? You must know that the soul has two sets of powers, inner and outer. These must all be stilled and the powers which move the body as well. All these powers must be fetched in, not one of them is able to remain at work, the soul being simply the motionless form of the body. As the prophet says, ‘While creatures were all asleep God spoke His silent word into my soul.’” —*Eckhart*.

ONE ESSENCE, ONE LAW, ONE AIM

A Sermon of Buddha*

The Tathagata addressed the venerable Kashyapa to dispel the uncertainty and doubt of his mind, and said :

“All things are made of one essence, yet things are different according to the forms which they assume under different impressions. As they form themselves so they act, and as they act so they are.

It is, Kashyapa, as if a potter made different vessels out of the same clay. Some of these pots are to contain sugar, others rice, others curds and milk ; others still are vessels of impurity. There is no diversity in the clay used ; the diversity of the pots is only due to the moulding hands of the potter who shapes them for the various uses that circumstances may require.

And as all things originate from one essence, so they are developing according to one law and they are destined to one aim, which is Nirvana.

Nirvana comes to you, Kashyapa, if you thoroughly understand, and if you live according to your understanding, that all things are of one essence and that there is but one law. Hence, there is but one Nirvana as there is but one truth, not two or three.

And the Tathagata is the same unto all beings, differing in his attitude only in so far as all beings are different.

The Tathagata recreates the whole world like a cloud shedding its waters without distinction. He has the same sentiments for the high as for the low, for the wise as for the ignorant, for the noble-minded as for the immoral.

The great cloud full of rain comes up in this wide universe covering all countries and oceans to pour down its rain everywhere, over all grasses, shrubs, herbs, trees of different species, families of plants of different names growing on the earth, on the hills, on the mountains, or in the valleys.

* Extracted from *The Gospel of Buddha* by Paul Carus.

Then, Kashyapa, the grasses, shrubs, herbs, and wild trees suck the water emitted from that great cloud which is all of one essence and has been abundantly poured down; and they will, according to their nature, acquire a proportionate development, shooting up and producing blossoms and fruits in their season.

Rooted in one and the same soil, all those families of plants and germs are quickened by water of the same essence.

The Tathagata, however, O Kashyapa, knows the law whose essence is salvation, and whose end is the peace of Nirvana. He is the same to all, and yet knowing the requirements of every single being, he does not reveal himself to all alike. He does not impart to them at once the fullness of omniscience, but pays attention to the dispositions of the various beings."

CICERO ON THE GODS

There are and have been philosophers who thought that the Gods had absolutely no direction of human affairs, and if their opinion is true, what piety can there be, and what holiness, and what obligation of religion? It is right that these should be accorded, in purity and simplicity of heart, to the Divinities. . . . But if They have neither the power nor the wish to aid us; if They have no care at all for us and take no notice of what we do; if there is nothing that can find its way from Them to human life, what reason is there for our rendering to them any worship or honour or prayers?

On the other hand, in an empty and artificial pretence of faith, piety cannot find a place any more than the other virtues, for without piety holiness and religion will disappear and when these are gone great confusion and disturbance of life must inevitably ensue. Indeed when piety towards the Gods is removed, I am not so sure that good faith, fraternity, and justice, the chief of virtues, are not also removed.

But there is another school of philosophers, great and high-minded, who hold that the entire universe is ordered and ruled by the intellect and wisdom of the Gods, and more than this, that the Gods take counsel and forethought for the needs of men.

THE ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY

PROCLUS*

Proposition CLXXXII

Every divine participated intellect is participated by divine souls

For if participation assimilates the participant to that which is participated, and renders the former connascent with the latter, it is evident that the participant of a divine intellect must be a divine soul, as being suspended from a divine intellect, and that through intellect as a medium it must participate of the Deity which is immanent in it. For Deity conjoins the soul which participates of It with intellect, and binds that which is divine to that which is divine.

Proposition CLXXXIII

Every intellect which is participated, but is intellectual alone, is participated by souls which are neither divine, nor yet subject to a mutation from intellect into a privation of intellect

For neither are divine souls of this kind, nor such as participate of intellect. For souls participate of the Gods through a divine intellect, as was before demonstrated. Nor are souls which admit of mutation of this kind. For every intellect is participated by natures which are always intellectual, both according to essence and according to energy. For this is evident from what has been shown.

Proposition CLXXXIV

Concerning Soul

Every soul is either divine, or subject to change from intellect into a privation of intellect; or always remains as a medium between these, but is inferior to divine souls

* For previous sections see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 56 to 101.

For if a divine intellect indeed is participated by divine souls, but an intellectual intellect by those souls alone which are neither divine, nor receive a mutation from intelligence into a privation of intellect—for there are souls of this kind which sometimes perceive intellectually, and sometimes do not—if this be the case, it is evident that there are three genera of souls. The first of these, indeed, are divine; the second are not divine, yet always participate of intellect; and the third are those which are sometimes changed into an intellectual condition, and sometimes into a privation of intellect.

Proposition CLXXXV

All divine souls are gods psychically. But all those that participate of an intellectual intellect are the perpetual attendants of the Gods. And all those that are the recipients of mutation are only sometimes the attendants of the Gods

For if some souls have divine light supernally shining upon them, but others are endued with perpetual intelligence, and others again only sometimes participate of this perfection; then the first of these among the multitude of souls will be analogous to the Gods. But the next to these will always follow the Gods in consequence of always energizing according to intellect, and will be suspended from divine souls, having the same relation to them as that which is intellectual to that which is divine. And the souls which only sometimes energize intellectually and follow the Gods, neither participate of intellect after a manner always the same, nor are always able to be converted to the intelligible in conjunction with divine souls: for that which only sometimes participates of intellect cannot by any means whatever be always conjoined with the Gods.

(To be continued)