

"Point out the 'Way'—however dimly, and lost among the host—as does the evening star to those who tread their path in darkness."

The Theosophic Messenger

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR

THE INTERCHANGE OF THEOSOPHICAL OPINIONS AND NEWS.

The Theosophical Society is not responsible for any statement contained herein unless set forth in an official document.

All readers are cordially invited to send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. All communications should be written plainly and on one side of the paper only, and addressed to the editor, Room 7, Odd Fellows' Building, San Francisco, Cal. Subscription, 50 cents per annum.

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VOL. I.

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Edited by W. J. WALTERS

NATIONAL COMMITTEE LETTER.

DEAR CO-WORKERS:

It is about a year ago that our first letters on reference study work appeared in MERCURY. Since then many practical suggestions, references and questions have been received, which we condense for this letter, and which will, we hope, open up a field of work whereby our members may join forces for organized reference hunting and indexing of Theosophical subjects. Everyone who reads at all can help. Two methods are given: First, culling special passages of Theosophical interest from every book or magazine read; and second, what might be called the topic method.

First Method: So surely is the world's progress in line with the Ancient Wisdom teachings, that we cannot take up a thoughtful book or magazine without coming across whole passages corrobora-

tive of them. To keep abreast with the times by collecting all such fragments for propaganda work with thoughtful people, let us make the utmost use of them, by placing them at the disposal of all fellow students, by the following simple method: Use as a bookmark a half sheet of notepaper, at the head of which write title and edition of book, magazine or article to be read. Even in the most desultory reading, watch for statements bearing on Theosophy, either of scientific, ethical, philosophical or religious import. Make note of them by writing on the bookmark the subject of each striking passage, with the chapter or page on which it occurs. As each book or magazine article is finished, make a neat copy of these references, giving title of book, substance of and number for each reference. These copies should be placed on file at the Branch headquarters, and let it be well known that all members have free access to them.

The Second Method is that of gathering references topically, and is the one

used in dictionary making. Write subjects of special interest to be looked up on separate slips of paper, and gradually fill them by writing under each heading the number of page and book wherein such subjects are treated. Let each F. T. S. first decide upon some one topic and determine to learn all that can be found upon this subject. Hunt it down in all Theosophical or other books or magazines available, following this one clue in all its bearings, with dogged persistency and resolutely disregarding all alluring byways and seductive sidepaths. Let him keep a careful note of book, page and substance of every clear allusion to or the best explanation of the topic chosen. Once a month copy these references and file them at the Branch headquarters as explained below. Whichever method is chosen, if uniform paper is used, each member would soon gather a collection of sheets, that could be classified and neatly pinned together with a general index of the same, and which would be of value to him for future reference and aid to his memory, or in getting up a paper to be read at a Branch meeting.

In order that the results of such reading may be placed at the disposal of fellow-students, let each Branch appoint one of its most studious members, or authorize the Corresponding Member to receive all copies of such references and place them on file. It should be the duty of this Reference Bureau Member to sift, classify and index these in an index book, this book to be kept at the Branch headquarters, where any member wishing to study up a certain subject may look it over and find the time-saving references.

On the first of each month, the Reference Bureau member is requested to send a condensed summary of all such references gathered during the month, to the Reference Bureau, National Committee,

26 Van Buren Street, Chicago. As fast as received by this Committee, they will be carefully reviewed, sifted, condensed, indexed and classified under various headings, and kept at the headquarters of above address subject to the call of all inquiring students. From time to time they will be sent to the columns of the THEOSOPHIC MESSENGER for publication. Thus by centralizing and condensing this work, we can form the nucleus of an index of Theosophical literature and its modern corroborative testimony.

Members of scientific training, professors, doctors, etc., have it in their power to accumulate valuable references from their medical, chemical, astronomical, electrical or mathematical studies and current scientific magazines, which would be of peculiar interest and use to studious members lacking access to such publications. Think of the information about X rays, liquid air, electricity, ether, hypnotism, radiant matter, etc., which only the few Theosophists can see unless they are pointed out by specialists in these fields of science.

Here are two recently received:

"What is the Soul?" by Stuart Chace, in *Modern Medical Science*, September, 1899, published at 466 West 151st Street, New York.

"The Solar System in the Light of Recent Discoveries," by Professor T. J. See, *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1899.

To put this into practical form, that our fellow students may select something definite for a beginning, we give a few of the questions and topics for reference study received from correspondents.

TOPICS SUGGESTED FOR STUDY.

Sound; Color; The Cadences; The Three Logoi—Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma; Fire: The Three Gunas; Ishwara; Vibrations.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY.

Where can information be found on the meaning of the T. S. symbols and seal?

Where can I find the clearest statements proving that Nirvana does not mean annihilation?

The human physical body forms, matures and decays on its own special plane. Do the other bodies do the same on theirs? If so, where is it stated?

To what do the pralayas between the Manvantaric Rounds correspond in the life cycle of man? Can any references be given in explanation?

Where in our literature is it stated that our Fifth Race or Sub-Race has four or five hundred thousand years yet to run? Will any member having a copy of the first edition of "Esoteric Buddhism" see if it occurs in that volume and especially on the page which would correspond to page 147 of the seventh edition?

Members having access to the old files of *Lucifer*, *The Theosophist*, *Path*, *Mercury*, *Vahan*, and *T. P. S. Siftings*, perhaps fail to realize the great service they can render by hunting through them for references to the above topics and questions. The older F. T. S. agree that there are many hidden treasures here, and which, when unearthed, will be gladly typewritten by the National Committee, listed in their Lecture Bureau and sent to Branches for special study. It is hoped that members belonging to Branches possessing these, will upon reading these lines, take a vow unto themselves to give this branch of our literature special attention and share these treasures with members less fortunate than themselves. We suggest that such members begin with "The Three Gunas", or perhaps hunt for the answer to the following question received by us from a member: "Where, outside of the 'Secret Doctrine', can I find informa-

tion on the primary and secondary 'Creations', so-called, by H. P. B.?"

If there are any individual members, or members at large, who feel specially drawn to help in reference reading, they are cordially invited to write to the National Committee at the above address, when further details, here omitted for lack of space, will be given. There are several questions on hand specially adapted to more advanced students and needing some careful study.

And now, fellow students, each and every one, please to consider this call for references as a personal appeal, so that a large body of readers will seriously begin the work of reading with the purpose of sharing their references with fellow members. Branches particularly interested will do well to write direct to Golden Gate Lodge, San Francisco, for a description of its reference study class.

Sincerely and fraternally,

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE.

PROPAGANDA FUND.

DEAR F. T. S.:

The year draws to a close, and we stand waiting, not alone for its death, but more anxiously, perhaps, for the birth of the coming one, with its untried days and opportunities. We look back on what we have done and then forward with high hopes as to the possibilities of the days to come. It is within my province to tell a little of what has been done during the past year in connection with the Propaganda Fund of the American Section. To tell the story briefly, a year ago the Address Committee sent out, approved by Mr. Fullerton, a letter to each Branch Secretary, enclosing circular letters and pledge cards to be distributed among all members. Secretaries were urged to bring this matter prominently

before their respective Branches and to hasten returns when possible. The circular letter set forth the need of increasing the fund, as the growth of the Section demands sustaining. New Branches were being formed and lecturers were needed to help their advancement and start them on the right lines of study. It was suggested that members pledge their support as freely as possible and that remittances be made regularly—"both because a small gift regularly made is easier to the giver, and because a regular flow into the treasury is of great value, inasmuch as dependence may be placed upon it." The committee is pleased to acknowledge responses from all quarters of the Section. Of course we did not get all desired or needed, but the money so collected will have made by the end of the year an addition of somewhat over three hundred dollars to the fund. Many thanks to the helpers and for the general promptness with which the payments have been made.

This coming year we shall need still more money, and just as much as can possibly be given to the cause. There are now seventy Branches in the American Section and they require help. The great and growing necessity is the substantial establishment of a corps of lecturers and the means to keep them constantly in the field. Of course this demands money, but we ought to be able to raise it, and to do so let us each give a little *regularly*. If there are five hundred members of the American Section and each gives five cents a week, do you realize how much that will be at the end of the year? No one should pledge himself to more than he is quite sure he can pay every week or month, as the case may be.

There is a supply of printed pledge cards on hand and we would urge Secretaries to again bring this matter to the

front and cooperate with the committee in securing the funds, and we hope that all the pledges made for 1899 will be renewed for 1900. Remittances, pledges and inquiries may be directed as heretofore to the subjoined address. Remittances may be made through Branch Secretaries when more convenient.

There has always been a discriminating feeling against "raising money" or "begging" of any kind, throughout the American Section. However that may be, we must face the problem of living in a world where the medium of convenience is money, and we cannot clothe or feed ourselves without it, neither can we print nor buy books nor ride on trains. Money we must have while we dwell in the flesh. And if we deny ourselves something in the giving, so much the better and larger the gift.

"The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,

In whatso we share with another's need;

Not what we give, but what we share,

For the gift without the giver is bare;

Who gives himself with his alms feeds three—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

For the growth of the cause,

Faternally yours,

PAULINE G. KELLY, *Chairman*.

Address: 278 Bissell Street,

Chicago, Ill.

BRANCH REPORTS.

BOSTON, MASS.—The Alpha Branch is beginning the work of the winter under unusually favorable auspices, owing to the presence of Miss Marie A. Walsh, of California, the well-known worker in Theosophic fields, and, for a short time only, the Pandit Lalan, of Bombay, India, who has spent the last three years in Chicago, where he has made many warm friends. Miss Walsh's name is so familiar to all T. S. circles that it is hardly necessary to mention her brilliant lecturing and teaching and her untiring energy and patience in the work. Although her visit to Boston has as yet hardly begun, she has already provided us with a fund of intellectual riches in the five

lectures given to audiences steadily growing larger as her work becomes known, so that it will probably be necessary before long to provide more extensive seating accommodations than can be furnished at headquarters. The students in the Branch feel deeply the delight of working under the guidance of a capable leader, instead of painfully and slowly working their own way to an understanding in our great fields of philosophy. It is conspicuously true that it is oftentimes difficult for our young students to see the Theosophic wood for the trees, but members of Miss Walsh's classes find difficulties vanish in a truly remarkable manner, while her explanations are so interesting that the Saturday evening "Beginners' Class" numbers as many old students as beginners—though, strictly speaking, we call ourselves *all* beginners in this wonderful science of life. Classes on "Mind Training" and on "Esoteric Astrology" are promised us by Miss Walsh, and a Link of the Golden Chain is to be started in response to a long felt but hitherto impracticable desire on the part of many members. Mrs. Holbrook of the Dharma Branch has materially assisted in the attainment of this object by loaning to the Branch a parlor organ, without which it would have been impossible to have provided music, which Miss Walsh considers an indispensable part of a children's class. On the two Sunday mornings during which Pandit Lalan has been with us he has lectured on "Optimistic Emerson", and on "Eastern and Western Science." He is teaching classes on Concentration and Meditation, and in Sanskrit. The Sunday afternoon class for the study of "The Ancient Wisdom" continues, and a small class—not to exceed seven members—is being started on Wednesday mornings for studying "The Secret Doctrine." The union meetings, when members of the different Branches unite on a Sunday afternoon in each month and a representative of each Branch speaks on a given subject, continue to be very enjoyable; "Rounds and Races" were treated in last month's meeting. Devotion, self-sacrifice and study promise to be the key-notes of the season's work amongst our little band. May we not venture to see in them the promise of the dawning of a brighter and more radiant day for our Cause—the Cause of Humanity? Greetings to all our brothers, East and West. K.W.

CHICAGO, ILL. (Chicago T. S.).—E. P. H. writes: In addition to the three study classes of which we spoke in the October MESSENGER, a

training class has been formed under the leadership of Miss Edith Houston. Marked interest is shown by the members of each class, all of whom have settled down to study with a strong determination to become earnest and sincere students, rather than casual readers or curious listeners. A group for the study of Hindu Ethics is also in process of formation, with Dr. Mary Weeks Burnett as leader. The regular Sunday meetings begin with November. Looking over the field of work in Chicago, we find that the four Branches have altogether eighteen activities weekly.

BROOKLYN, N. Y.—A. E. P. writes: Mercury Branch continued its weekly meetings through the summer, and seems as fresh and ready for the season's work as though it had taken a vacation. Thus far it has confined itself to the seven Manuals for study. Its method has been to read and freely discuss each book in its order, each person present being invited to do a share of the work. We have just begun the seventh book, and though only in the Kindergarten of Theosophy, we feel that we are learning something of its underlying principles. The visitors we have had from time to time—some of them members of the T. S., others not—have added much to the interest and instruction. We hope to have Miss Walsh with us early in December.

LOS ANGELES, CAL.—C. D. G. writes: Harmony Lodge has held its usual Sunday evening meetings at which the following lectures have been given: "Evolution in the Light of Theosophy", by Miss Nelson; "Birds *versus* Pride", Mrs. Snelling; "Planetary Influence upon Humanity;" and "Concentration." The Social Committee provided an entertaining evening which was duly appreciated. The Golden Chain Group is feeling a wave of renewed activity and several new links have joined us. We regret to lose one of our links, but she goes to join the Seattle Golden Chain and carries our best wishes. The pale blue ribbon badges have been replaced by pink ones; and the lesson carried the idea that when the color red—corresponding to the strength, energy and will power of the planet Mars—should be blended with white, "The Great White Light", we will have pink, which tells us to use all our strength, energy and will to the highest purpose. The considerable interest evinced in the Friday evening study class has resulted in a change. The study class re-

mains for visitors and others as usual, but it has embodied a new feature—that of a training class. Those who wish to take advantage of this feature enroll their names and must speak or prepare work when called upon, those who are simply members or visitors in the study class being privileged to respond or decline. A critic is also appointed, who sits at the end of the hall, and the enrolled members must speak so that he can hear them. At the end of the lesson the critic submits a kindly criticism. It has been decided that the class procure and use the "Ancient Wisdom Syllabus;" therefore the study of the "Ancient Wisdom" will be taken up as soon as convenient.

CHICAGO, ILL.—Of general activities, H. A. H. writes: The Golden Chain Group now numbers thirty little ones, and the task now confronting the workers is the securing of quarters adequate to the continued growth of the Group. Mrs. Havens, Miss Houston and Mr. Prime, who are in charge, are at their posts regularly each Sunday at 3 p. m. Public meetings in Englewood, under the auspices of the different Chicago Branches, have been suspended, although the attendance had grown to goodly proportions, and the interest manifested by non-members was keen. As yet the Sunday night meetings at 26 Van Buren Street have not been revived. The interest in the "Secret Doctrine" class conducted by the Shila Branch is unabated, and a recent addition to its membership is Mr. Wake, who has charge of the Anthropological Department of the Field Columbian Exposition. At the Eastern Psychology Branch, attendance Thursday evenings is good. New-comers, unacquainted with the teachings, are here afforded an opportunity to gain a clear and concise grasp of the tenets. The Manuals are being used by this class. Altogether, Theosophy in Chicago is on a better footing than ever before in the history of the Society.

BUTTE, MONT.—Butte Lodge, T. S. has experienced an unprecedented period of prosperity since last August when we had only seven members, and now the membership is thirty. This grand work is all due to Mrs. Havilah Squiers, who came here from Washington, D. C., and has remained with us since last August. We meet every Wednesday night and study "Man and His Bodies", using Mrs. Brainard's "Syllabus." Every Friday night we have a class in the "Secret Doctrine" led by Mrs. Squiers,

and on Sunday night we have a class in the "Path of Discipleship and Meditation." Each member seems imbued with an earnest desire for the truth. We recently had an election of officers: A. B. Keith was elected President; Mrs. O. W. Speer, Vice-President; Peter Hanson, Second Vice-President; Charles H. Ring, Secretary; Carl J. Smith, Corresponding Secretary; Wentworth Rice, Librarian. C. J. S.

CHICAGO, ILL.—The ordinary activities of the Shila Branch are being carried on regularly. The Thursday Class (the outcome of the Branch) was organized three years ago, and its lines of study have been both devotional and intellectual. It is now reading Mr. Mead's "Orpheus", following the plan formulated by Miss Walsh. Those attending the class are much interested in the gods and goddesses, and in finding the expression of an old form of truth in what have heretofore been regarded as myths. The Secret Doctrine and Saturday evening classes are pursuing their regular study. On the whole, the work of the Branch during the past year has been profitable, and we trust the new cycle, when ushered in, will be propitious for the progress of the T. S.

CLASS WORK AND REFERENCE WORK COMBINED.

(The following references for study have been used by the Ancient Wisdom class of Chicago Branch. The questions are those of the "Ancient Wisdom Syllabus" and the method of class work is to read the answer to each question in the "Ancient Wisdom" and then correlate with the statements made in the references given below. It is hoped that any class or individual using this method of study will send further references for each question. What is given below, being the work of students, mistakes and inaccuracies will constantly slip in, and it is our earnest desire that such errors shall be pointed out. Please mail all additions or corrections to this work to THEOSOPHIC MESSENGER, Room 7, Odd Fellows' Building, San Francisco.)

ABBREVIATIONS USED.

CC. means "Christian Creed," C. W. Leadbeater; L. & F. means "Evolution of Life and Form," by Annie Besant; S. D. means "Secret Doctrine" (new edition paging); S. P. M. means "Seven Principles of Man," by Annie Besant; R. means "Reincarnation, by Annie Besant; Dh. means "Dharma," by Annie Besant.

THE ANCIENT WISDOM.

CHAPTER I, PHYSICAL PLANE.

From what divisions of the Physical

Plane are the materials of each drawn?
 M. & H. B., pp. 9-11; 18.
 S. P. M., pp. 5, 6.

What is the general function of the physical body?
 M. & H. B., pp. 12; 14-28.

What is the particular function of the Etheric Double?

Medium of Electric and Vital Forces...
M. & H. B. pp. 9, 27.

Prana....." " p. 29.

Fiery Lives.....S. P. M., p. 15.

Diffused Consciousness....." " p. 11.

How can the physical body be refined?
 M. & H. B. pp. 18-27.

Beginnings of true Yoga.....

.....M. & H. B., pp. 19-24.

Etheric Double follows suit.....

.....M. & H. B., p. 28.

See "Occult Chemistry," in *Lucifer*, 1895.
 (A typewritten copy of this article with illustrations in blue print can be obtained by addressing "Lecture Bureau, National Committee," 26 Van Buren Street, Chicago.)

When was the building process transferred from the Monad of Form to man himself?

Life Wave coming from First Logos...
E. L. & F., p. 102.

How does the value of the body as a vehicle for its ego increase by making it more refined?

Becomes sensitive to sights and sounds which verify the truths of Theosophy..

.....M. & H. B., p. 20.

Increased strength of material likened to tempered steel.....M. & H. B., p. 22.

Danger of yoga to impure bodies.....

.....M. & H. B., p. 24.

Healthy condition of discipleship and service.....M. & H. B., 33-35.

How does information about the eternal world reach the conscious entity man?
 S. P. M., pp. 11-12.

What is the lowest form of clairvoyance?

Atmospheric ether visible to the trained sight.....M. & H. B., p. 28.

Etheric doubles, new colors and tints, various classes of elementals, transparency of physical objects visible to the etheric sight.....

.....Clairvoyance, C. W. L., pp. 27, 29.

Under what conditions are the dense and etheric bodies separated during life?

M. & H. B., p. 32.

S. P. M. pp. 8-11.

Explain ordinary dream consciousness.

Dreams, by C. W. Leadbeater, pp. 25-32.

Experiments on dream state.....

.....Dreams, p. 61.

Give an account of the etheric double after death and before birth.

M. & H. B., p. 29.

S. P. M., p. 12.

Effect of cremation on.....S. P. M., p. 13.

ENQUIRER.

QUESTION VI.

S. A. N.—Can we hope to meet after death those we have loved here if on different planes, and of different faiths? Say one who, though trusting in God, yet believed in total extinction, and another who was either a Christian or a Theosophist: and do we meet in Devachan, or where we first go after death, or have we to wait till we return to earth?

We are often separated here from those we love; are we to judge in this from the known to the unknown?

A. P. S.—This question is not put now for the first time, but it is extremely important that Theosophical students should correctly apprehend the answer. At the first glance people are apt to think the teaching of occult knowledge comfortless in this respect, as compared with the assurances blithely offered sometimes by—one is tempted to say religious ignorance, to make the antithesis complete, but let us rather put it, by the uninstructed imagination of commonplace religious teachers. Content to suppose that he has reached the culmination of all possible earthly evolution, the ordinary religious man assumes that after death friends will resume their progress

together under happier conditions, and the rest he leaves involved in a golden mist of uncertainty. The hypothesis, however, ignores many difficulties. Not to speak of those entangled with the necessity of future incarnations, the ordinary assumption entirely overlooks the trouble that may arise in heaven when A. B., for instance, requires for his happiness the love and companionship of C. D., while C. D., quite indifferent to A. B., imperatively requires the companionship of E. F. to make heaven a sphere of happiness for him or her. In fact, the whole ordinary conception of after death states, inasmuch as they touch the problems of companionship at all, calmly assume that "those we have loved" have always loved us; that all affections are mutual, and the task of Nature in providing happiness for her children, assuming she is disposed to do this, perfectly plain sailing. What should be recognized as obvious is, that some of the bitterest griefs humanity is capable of feeling down here must be protracted in "heaven," or else there must be some desperate mistake in the commonplace theory of heaven and of the after death conditions of people who have known one another in earthly life.

This exordium is necessary in dealing with the Theosophical explanation as to how the matter really stands in the devachanic condition of the ordinary entity after death (and after the intervening condition on the astral plane); the devachanic vision, as it has sometimes been called, is *not* a reality in the sense usually attached to the word, but a delightful illusion in which the entity concerned fully believes he has the loving companionship of those whose companionship he desires. That illusion is built up of all the thoughts and desires he has had concerning them in the past life, so it presents them to him in the most engaging

aspect. And the vision never fades until the long period of devachanic rest is over, although it may go through all the modifications dictated by the variegated interests of the past life. Although a spiritual existence in the strictest sense of the term, it is not one of the most exalted order, any more than the ordinary human being to whom it is allotted is a being of the most exalted order. The rupa-devachanic state is a condition of the most perfect happiness while it lasts, but is essentially a condition adapted to the spiritual needs of humanity in its present stage of evolution, not one that fulfils all our loftiest imaginings—far outrunning our present evolution—concerning the final state of spiritual perfection. Before we can attain to that, we must have reached the final perfection of earthly evolution, and we are very far short of that as yet.

In one sense there is a greater degree of what is commonly meant by reality about the intercourse that may in some cases be possible on the astral plane, than can be fairly recognized as belonging to the rupa-devachanic condition. In the case of two entities actually inspired by a mutual love as the strongest force of their nature, and passing away from this life at periods not very widely separated in time, the meeting on the astral plane might be quite genuine—even as regarded from the earthly point of view, but the ultimate falling asleep and the awakening on the rupa-devachanic plane would not seem to impair the perfection of such companionship.

As for the embarrassment of "different planes and different faiths," it will be seen that the devachanic vision must necessarily ignore all such questions, having its origin for each person in his own subjective condition. It seems only necessary to add that the arupa plane of devachan is a sphere of existence in

which the entity capable of passing on thither has outlived the need of the ordinary devachanic vision. There he is in the presence of spiritual realities, but these are not easily comprehended from a level of thought so saturated with ideas of form as that on which most of us in incarnation habitually live.

X.—I have no doubt that more qualified writers than myself will take up the general question, but there is one point I would like to touch. The querist speaks of "one who, though trusting in God, yet believed in total extinction." I should like to emphasize as far as possible that nothing in our future directly depends on our belief or disbelief in any dogmatic statement of any kind. If anyone has been, in life, in complete sympathy with Christians, he will not be separated from them hereafter because he did not find their arguments for the life after death carry conviction to his mind. When he comes to full consciousness on the other side he will find he has been mistaken—that is all. On the other hand, if a man has lived the materialistic life, which is another and quite different thing—if he has given himself wholly to seek his pleasure in this life, regardless of anything beyond—the fact that he has given full credence to the *doctrine* of a future life will not by one hair's-breadth alter his destiny. When freed from the bonds of the physical body, men will draw together, not according to the articles of their creed, but according to the nature they have made for themselves in their past lives.

I have said nothing directly depends on our belief of this doctrine or that. We are accustomed to be told by theologians that no one can be a good man or worthy of God's favor who disbelieves their own particular creed; but the readers of *The Vahan* hardly need me to disclaim this. The more correct statement

would be that a man's belief is a symptom—a result of what he is. And yet, so curiously have faith and practice been separated in England during the past three centuries, that we should do our English fellows strange injustice if we judged them thus. Their professed creeds lag far behind the actual moral height to which they have attained; so that we cannot say that their belief will very seriously affect their destiny, even indirectly, by its consequences on their character; for, practically, it does not influence them at all. Where a faith is alive and aggressive the case is different; I think a Christian would hardly find himself well received in a Mohammedan "heaven."

I think our answer must be that there is nothing in a mere difference of dogma to divide us after death; what is meant by a "difference of planes" I don't quite understand. It seems clear that those bonds of affection which have their root only in the body must drop away with the body and leave merely the spiritual affinities, which often have little or no relationship with our friendships on the physical plane. We have often been reminded that we know, in actual fact, almost nothing of our dearest friends in this world; and the more complete knowledge we gain on higher planes, whilst often showing us a close relationship with strangers, can hardly fail now and then to betray to us that some of those we have loved have in truth but little in common with our desires and aspirations and are not truly related to us at all. But we shall gain far more than we shall lose by the change.

QUESTION VII.

B. G.—*Are disagreeable dreams of some dreaded presence, that seems to have a paralyzing influence on the sleeper, which can only be overcome by a strong*

effort of will, sometimes a proof of contact with some undesirable entity on the astral plane?

C. W. L.—We are hardly justified in speaking of a dream as a proof of anything; but we may perhaps assume that the questioner wishes rather to know whether such a dream would be likely to be an imperfect remembrance of a real encounter with some disagreeable astral entity.

Probably it would be so, though there is nothing in what is said which gives any clear indication of the nature of the entity. It might be some mischievous nature spirit, it might be some evil artificial elemental, or it might be a human being, either living or dead, who for some unholy end of his own desired to dominate the will of the dreamer. It might be a thought-form sent by someone who cherishes hostility towards the sleeper; but perhaps the most probable hypothesis of all is that it is a thought-form or artificial elemental created by the sleeper himself—the result of some desire or current of thought in which he indulges during waking life without recognizing its true character. With the clearer sight which is gained by escaping from the physical body he might perceive that this habit, whether of thought or action, was in reality limiting or paralyzing to the true self, and so he would strive to free himself from its influence, and it would seem to him a vague presence to be dreaded. In any case, and to whatever class the entity belongs, the dreamer need not fear it, but should oppose firm and confident resistance to its efforts.

QUESTION VIII.

B. G.—*Of what nature are the rapidly flashing sparks of white light, the larger and more permanent spots of a*

delicate violet, seen with the eyes open or shut, and the masses of luminous dark blue, seen only with the eyes shut? These were never seen before the enquirer became a vegetarian and practiced concentration.

C. W. L.—It is impossible to give a definite answer to a question such as this (and it is a specimen of hundreds that are received) without very much more information. Indeed, to be really certain it would probably be necessary to investigate specially each individual case. It is on the whole most likely that such objects are either thought-forms or portions of the human aura; and in either case they may belong either to the seer himself or to someone else who is near. On the other hand, they may be "common objects" of the astral plane—mere clouds of astral or etheric matter which happen to float across the line of the partially-opened sight.

Whatever they may be, they belong to a world not open to the entirely undeveloped eye, and it is therefore quite natural that they should appear as a result of the effort to practice concentration and to live a pure life. The questioner may certainly be encouraged to persevere in his efforts, in the hope that presently more definite visions may replace these clouds and sparks. The first dawns of clairvoyance not infrequently manifest themselves in the way in which he describes.

QUESTION IX.

W. E. F.—*We are told that Jesus was born in B. C. 105, and that the Christ continued to visit His disciples in the astral body for something over fifty years after the physical body was destroyed. This being so, must we place the epistles of Paul at an earlier date than is usually assigned to them? If not, how*

are we to understand 1 Cor. xv. 6, 8? The "greater part" of those who had seen the Master could not have remained for eighty years after the time that His presence had been withdrawn.

G. R. S. M.—The point raised in this query is of the greatest interest and importance and opens up a host of questions, at only one or two of which we can glance in these columns. In the first place we are confronted with the crucial problem: What was the story of Jesus known to Paul? The answer to this problem is the very starting point of verifiable history in the whole area of Christian origins. The Letters of Paul, (some ten at any rate of them) are the earliest authentic documents of general Christendom. And if this be so they are of the very first importance as showing how the nascent religion towards the middle of the first century presented itself to the mind of a man of intelligence who became perhaps the most ardent propagandist the Faith has ever possessed. The more carefully we study the letters of Saul of Tarsus the more clearly the question forces itself upon us: Did this man know the now familiar story of the four later canonical Gospels; had he made it part of himself; had he got the great sayings by heart? If this was familiar to him, then it is almost incredible that he could have omitted it from his exhortations, and yet we find but the vaguest references to the gospel story, and even when we have found them we cannot be certain that they may not have been added to the original text by an editor or copyist. Of the historical Jesus we can learn next to nothing from Paul. He preaches a mystic Christ, of intense reality, it is true, and no vague abstraction. But if we follow Paul we move in an atmosphere foreign to that of the editors of the life.

Let us now turn to the summary of

Paul's teaching as set forth in his First Letter to the troubled little community at Corinth. It prefaces what the late Dean Mansel in his "Gnostic Heresies" calls "the apostle's elaborate and triumphant argument for the resurrection of the body" (p. 50)—whereby he means the "again-rising" of the physical body; and so indeed it is understood by the vast majority of Christians to-day. But does Paul lend his authority to any such interpretation? If we have the correct text, what he writes is very simple. He recalls to the minds of his pupils at Corinth how that his teaching had been:

"That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

"And that, he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures;

"And that *he was seen* of Cephas; then of the twelve;

"After that, *he was seen* of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep;

"After that, *he was seen* of James; then of all the apostles;

"And last of all *he was seen* of me also, as of one born out of due time (xv, 3-8).

The doctrinal points marked by the phrase "according to the scriptures", we may leave aside from our present inquiry and confine our attention to what we call the historic statement. I have italicized the four times repeated phrase "*he was seen,*" because it is the key to the whole position. It is the "authorized" translation of the Greek, and occurs four times in the received text, followed in every case by the dative. The more correct rendering would be "*he appeared unto.*" Now we know from Paul himself (and also from "The Acts," the latest document of the whole canon) that this "*appearing*" was not of a physical nature as far as the apostle himself was concerned.

Paul, however, makes no distinction between the nature of the appearance to himself and of that to the others. He uses the identical phrasing for all, and evidently, therefore, considered that it was of the same nature. In brief the "gospel" of Paul taught a non-physical appearing of the Christ among his pupils.

It is also interesting to note the strange term used by Paul of himself—"as of one born out of due time." We are here, as in so many other passages in the Pauline epistles, face to face with a technical Gnostic term. The "abortion" was the name applied to the incomplete plasm of the world-system before it was informed by the Reason of God, the Logos. As with the great world so with the little world; Paul, when he had the good fortune to "see" the Master, was as yet unformed, the Spirit had not descended upon him to make him a Child of the Father. In the days of Paul, the Christ doctrines were still for the most part taught in the inner communities, and the nomenclature was that of the Gnosis.

But, at last to take up W. E. F.'s question directly, what are we to think of "Cephas," and "the twelve," of the "five hundred brethren," of "James" and "all the apostles"? If we still have the words which Paul wrote before us, we are face to face with a number of difficulties which I am unable to solve without further assistance.

It is confidently asserted by all the most advanced students of occultism whom I have the pleasure of numbering among my friends, that the real historic Jesus was born 105 B. C. The only corroboration of this statement at present available to those of us who are compelled to confine our researches to the physical plane, is to be found in some obscure Jewish legends, which are so overloaded with bitter misrepresentation of the great Teacher that one is almost

ashamed to appeal to them. The same students who place the birth of Jesus at 105 B. C., confirm approximately the accepted date of Paul's activity, say 35-55 A. D.

I am inclined to believe myself, from a study of the mystic communities of the period and what I have heard about the earliest followers of the Christ, that the "Twelve" were an order which was continued intact by co-optation as vacancies occurred by death, and that "Cephas" was a title. There was always a "Cephas." The "apostles" mentioned were probably members of the existing community which had in course of time grouped itself round the "Twelve" nucleus. "James" was probably the name of the president of the existing community at Jerusalem. The "five hundred brethren" may perhaps refer to some larger gathering, that on some special occasion still within living memory had been favored with a Christophany, which was a rule reserved only for those belonging to the "apostolic" degree.

But even these hypotheses are not altogether satisfactory, for we have to distinguish clearly between the "Church" at Jerusalem with whose members Paul had such unsatisfactory relations, and the sources of his information, those from whom "he received" a doctrine apparently so radically different from that of "general" Christianity. After the dramatic incident at Damascus, Paul disappeared into "Arabia" for some three years. Whither did he go during these three eventful years? Occult tradition says he went to the Essene community of which Jesus a century before had been a member. The "Church" at Jerusalem, on the other hand, belonged to the Ebionite line of tradition, that of the "poor men" (*ebionim*), based solely on what they could understand of the public teaching of the Christ.

But the more we learn of the occult tradition of the at present lost history of the origins, the less are we inclined to regard the matter as simple. A gap of a hundred years is a terrible chasm to face, and at present I can hardly see the wisdom of saying any more about it. Let us, who aspire to be students of Theosophy, first of all familiarise ourselves with every source of information procurable on the physical plane, before puzzling our brains with other factors which have been kept hidden from the world for so many centuries.

BOOK REVIEWS.

The Theosophist (October).—In "Old Diary Leaves", Colonel Olcott relates, in most amusing fashion, his encounter with what he terms the "National Bug Congress", at Fyzabad, where he endeavored to speak at an open air meeting, but was obliged, after fifteen minutes of much discomfort, to surrender to the bugs. He also throws a little light upon the causes which led up to the founding of *Lucifer* in London by H. P. B., while her name still appeared as editor and half proprietor of the *Theosophist*. All the Colonel's remonstrances over such an unbusinesslike and unusual proceeding were of no avail. "Why Should We not Eat Animal Food?" is a clear argument by C. G. Kaji in favor of a vegetable diet, and many new ideas are here stated. The subject is considered from a scientific standpoint, and from the argument is deduced "that vegetable food is best suited for the human being. It gives the maximum of nourishment with the minimum of effort, and without defeating the purpose which the life it nourishes has to serve. Looking to his own interest, therefore, a human being should subsist on vegetable food." An article on "Karma", by W. G. John, brings out an idea which may have occurred to many before, but which is here very well stated, namely: that Karma, while it certainly is "cause and effect", is something more. Rightly considered, it also includes *character*. To illustrate—two sheep placed in similar straits would probably act alike. Two men under the same stress of circumstances will act according to the

character each has made for himself. In a shipwreck, one man may trample over the bodies of women and children to save himself; another, with no thought of self, will immediately rush to the rescue of his fellows. Two persons, brought face to face with trying circumstances, will garner from them, the one despair, bitterness and degradation, the other strength and sympathy for other suffering creatures. For "character is formed only by experience", and it may be "that those who have come through the tightest places—been the deepest immersed in the slough—shall be the brightest and the strongest among the units produced by the evolution of our time." Mr. Kessal's "Atomic Evolution" is concluded, some interesting facts being given regarding the pineal gland and the nervous system. Samuel Stuart contributes a paper on "Religious Epochs" and Wilton Hack writes a poem "Nearer to Thee", which might be of use at public meetings of Branches who have adopted congregational singing. Several other interesting articles, with Activities, Reviews and Comments, complete this issue.

Revue Theosophique Francaise (October).—This number commences with the translation of "The Lunar Pitris", by A. P. Sinnett and W. Scott Elliott; this is followed by another installment of the translation of Mrs. Besant's "Reincarnation." Dr. Pascal begins an interesting article on "Faith, Doubt and Certainty"—faith and doubt being treated in this issue. X. contributes an article on "The Puranas" and the translation of "Incidents in the Life of Count de St. Germain" is continued. "Questions and Answers," "Echoes of the Theosophical World," "Reviews" and the translation of the "Secret Doctrine" complete the contents.

We have also to acknowledge the receipt of *Theosophy in Australasia*, *Die Uebersinnliche Welt*, *Philadelphia*, *Teosofia*, etc. *The Theosophical Review* for November was received too late for review.

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