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Editorial

In this year of the disabled, which is also the year in which LIGHT sets off for its second century, we might take a look at our own disablements, and at what disablement means. Older civilisations have revered longevity for its own sake, perhaps a recognition that life is an arduous learning process which spares no one, though the particular means by which our spirits are tempered take myriad and subtle, often hidden, forms. In this context disablement is inability to manifest the best in ourselves at all times: a growth process we cannot leave behind and which, it appears, we shall have to take up again after we have left the physical body, in some state analagous to the purgatory, or purging, of religious tradition.

Though in one sense this is something we have to do for ourselves, we certainly cannot do it alone. It is a mutual process in which, whether we like it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not, we temper and are tempered by those with whom we find ourselves in contact. Help, we are told, in this as in all true endeavour, is available via (in Christian terminology) the angelic hierarchies, but we must ask for it. This in itself demands a certain humility. The experience of those who truly ask is that they receive; though in ways often unexpected and sometimes unrecognised at the time.

Purgatory, the accounts say, is feeling for ourselves what others have suffered as a result of our actions. Even here there seems to be opportunity in this life to do some of this painful work. Often we find ourselves on the receiving end of hurtful behaviour in a situation very similar to one in which we have done the hurting; sometimes unwittingly. There is redemption—growth of being—if we can accept the behaviour and recognise the justice of our hurt, no matter that the people concerned are different.

The paradox is that in the world of spiritual values disability consists in all the attributes we prize in ourselves and cling to. *Except a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it abideth by itself. But if it dies it beareth much fruit.*

B. M.

Angels in Everyday Life

NOEL DERMOT O'DONOGHUE

(A talk given at the Salisbury Centre, Edinburgh, on "Man and the Spirit-World".)

1. A World Without Angels

For many years now I have been able to set aside a natural tendency to worry about having too much to do in all sorts of ways in relation to time and energy, and I have placed all the business of my life in the hands of the angels, those marvellous friends who are somehow present here as I write in West Pilton Circus, Edinburgh, Scotland. Like a schoolboy I feel like going on to add Great Britain, Europe, Planet Earth, The Solar System, The Milky Way, The Universe. For the mention of angels places one immediately in a cosmic situation, at once overwhelming and exciting. The ancient philosophers and astronomers attached one or more angel to each of the heavenly bodies. These were the angels of the spheres, and one of their functions was to make music, the Music of the Spheres. Their main function, however, was to guide and harmonise the various parts of the universe, having special care of this precious and unique earth on which man lives between birth and death.

Alas! For *homo scientificus occidentalis* all these Shining Ones have died long ago. Not only is Pan dead, and all the nymphs and satyrs and dryads, but Gabriel has also passed away, leaving Mary of Nazareth bereft of her heavenly child. So has Raphael, leaving travellers with their air-tickets and Michelins. So, too, has Michael, guardian of the shores of Ireland, Brittany and Cornwall. So truly has Michael vanished that a Pope could visit Ireland for the first time in its dolorous and heroic history without mentioning Michael even once, without casting one glance towards that mighty wave-tormented rock named Michael's Skellig off the South-West Coast of the Island of Saints and Scholars. Pope John Paul came and went, and said many words, and was photographed several million times, but he said not one word of Michael, nor did he come within fifty miles of that ancient shrine of Michael where Christian monks lived and died for centuries, far out in the sea. Yet as it happened the day he came was the great ancient feast of Michael, September the 29th. He came at Michaelmas and no one noticed the day nor saw any significance in it. For even in those Celtic lands where once

Michael (and all the angels) was known and loved men no longer have eyes for these heavenly guides and companions.

Of course it must be said that these Celtic lands, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany, are now for many centuries the graveyard of the most dynamic civilisation this world has ever known, the civilisation which lifted Europe out of the Dark Ages and brought to birth Modern Europe with all its greatness and misery. This Celtic world now lies buried deep and seems entirely dead. With it the angels have vanished from Christendom. Yet the voices of this world are not all stilled; a few gentle scholars have brought them to us, have bent down and listened to the lost words of a dying culture and have written these words for us to hear. The greatest of these scholars was Alexander Carmichael, a man who deserves to stand with Rudolf Steiner, at the doorway of this century, as a herald of the angels to a people who have forgotten their best friends.

2. The Celtic Angels

Alexander Carmichael (1832 to 1912) was a Scottish civil servant who devoted all his spare time and retirement to collecting Gaelic poems and stories in the Western Islands and Highlands of Scotland. His six-volume collection (with translations) entitled *Carmina Gadelica* has saved a vast amount of oral tradition that was on the way to being lost forever. These poems and stories (poems mostly) provide a vivid portrait of a great Christian culture passing into oblivion. With the three twentieth century classics, *The Islandman, An Old Woman Remembers* and *Twenty Years Agrowing,* that came out of one small island on the South West Coast of Ireland (now inhabited only by cattle) they provide a noble and enduring epitaph of a culture which reaches back to the dawn of European literature.

The first two volumes of *Carmina Gadelica* were published in 1899, and reprinted in 1928; two more volumes were published in 1941, and a fifth in 1954. There is also a sixth volume of appendices. Carmichael provided a literal English translation of the material; more recently G. R. D. McLean has published a poetical translation, using Carmichael's Gaelic text.[1] A selection from *Carmina* was published in 1960 by the Christian Community Press under the title *The Sun Dances,* and this is still easily and cheaply available. A glance through any of these books will show that the angels are everywhere in these old Gaelic poems and prayers, coming and going as naturally as they ascended and descended upon the Son of Man (John 1, 51). They

are invoked in all kinds of blessings in the company of the Three, and of Mary, and the Son of Mary, of Joseph and the Apostles. It is a world of good companions. As he came to be oppressed and exploited the Gael lived in thatched cabins and rude hovels, but his habitation was full of shining presences, and he carried the light of heaven in his heart. That chameleon writer, Flann O'Brien, has written a brilliant satire called *The Poor Mouth* in which he "sends up" the literature of the bad old days of the Gaelic world. Both the satirist and the writers he satirises miss what may be called "the quality of the light", the way in which a situation of massive oppression and economic misery was overlighted by the heavenly presences. Viewed in relation to this overlighting the Marxist and Freudian analyses of religion seem particularly inept: there was no pie in the sky, for the sky was under the roof; there was no father-figure to give security and comfort but rather a whole company of holy beings visible only to the inner eye of love and self-giving. There was, of course, plenty of what is called magic, some of it rather dark, and plenty of what is called superstition, but these were diseases of a basically healthy organism that the modern world has killed.

Of the many poems and prayers I might choose from the Carmichael harvest to illustrate the presence of angels in this ancient world now passed away, I choose one called "Michael the Victorious". This was written down from a crofter's wife in South Uist and will be found on page 105 of *The Sun Dances*. It is a poem of clear, strong images, at times splendid and regal, at times close to the common sights and sounds of nature.

Stand guard all around
O Michael Victorious
On your bright shining steed
With your sword that tamed
The dragon. Your name:
Great Ranger of heaven
God's Warrior Man.
Be thou at my back
O Michael Victorious;
O Light of my Days
Thou shining and glorious
Guard me always.

My round I will make
With my saint by my side
On machair, on meadow-land,

On the cold hills of heather;
We'll travel together
Round this hard globe of earth.
No harm will come to me,
For your shield is over me,
O Michael Victorious
Light of my heart
O Michael Victorious
Shepherd of God.

I think we should pause for a moment to salute Janet MacIsaac, the crofter's wife who lived her very simple life in the aura of this noble vision. No doubt *homo officinalis* will find her quaint and charming rather than convincing, yet I think even the sceptic will admit that there is a kind of direct evidence of final truth in noble words and images, and in the clear eyes that express them. And the Christian must ask himself whether a poem like this is superstition or pleasant fancy, or rather a restatement of a theme that is not far from the centre of the experience of the first Christians. Indeed we know from the early accounts we have of the Christ-event that Jesus, for all his divinity, was helped in his time of deepest agony by an angel, and that he had a special word to say about the angels of little children who "always see the face of God". (Matt. 18, 10.)

What is most of all clear from this poem and the other poems and prayers of the Carmichael collection is that the angelic world was, for these people, as much part of their lives as the hills and the seas, and the daily pains and ardours of human living. They bring to our depaganised and dechristianised imagination the challenge of a way of life suffused with heavenly colours. In this rich fabric, nature and grace are most wonderfully, and indeed most curiously, blended. Long before the time of Patrick, long before the great event in the East, the hills and seas were full of heavenly presences. Nora Chadwick, the Celtic scholar, speaks of the beauty and dignity of these presences[2]. It is as if Michael and all the angels were already there, revealing their true identities only when Christ the true son (as Patrick calls him) shines across the land. So it is that as we listen to these poems and prayers we feel that the hills and the rivers and the windy uplands are full of voices, voices fresh and clear as the air of the Land of Youth, and yet as old as origins. These voices come faint and muffled in translation; in the Gaelic as in Hebrew the words seem to come straight from the Elohim, the makers of heaven and earth at the beginning.

3. Angels and the Theologian

Of course this consciousness of angelic presences and the invocation of their aid was by no means confined to Celtic Christianity. It is a substantial part of the Christian heritage East and West, and has in thinkers like Aquinas a formidable theological backing. And, of course, this tradition is still alive today. A few days ago I visited a family of Chilean refugees. The father is a Marxist, but his 10-year-old daughter was proud to repeat in Spanish an invocation to her guardian angel, which she says night and morning. Catholic children are still taught these invocations, though much less than formerly, and with less conviction on the part of parents and teachers. Preachers have little to say on the subject, and theologians tend to dismiss it in a paragraph or two. The Scripture scholars have cast out angels from the New Testament as if they were devils. Catholic dogmatic theologians tend to admit the reality of angels, but seem to regard them as somewhat embarrassing supernumeries. They are there in their own sphere, but man must make his own way on the earth: his task is to build the earth, admitting other worlds and even some kind of heaven when his earthly task is done. To focus on other regions is to miss the whole meaning of life; to look to the angels to do my work for me is to opt out, to live in a world of dreams. Thus Karl Rahner is ready to defend quite strongly the reality of angels but cannot allow them any real place in the Christian or any other way of life[3]. They are a kind of decorative adjunct to Christian doctrine, not really relevant to a Church come of age.

Now I want to take along with me Rahner's defence of the reality of angels with its massive background in Christian, Jewish and Muslim tradition, and to challenge his attitude to their relevance and helpfulness to contemporary man. Indeed I want to attack this kind of assertion head-on, and to affirm not just its contradictory but its contrary. I want to say two things: first, that in the individual life an openness to the spirits all around can transform our attitudes and activities in direction of wholeness, creativity and an *agape* at once costing and joyous; second, that the future of planet earth is no longer in the hands of men and women who try to build a better world together—for we have already passed the point of no return towards catastrophe—but depends entirely on whether men and women call in the angelic powers to save this planet, to lead it on to a more spiritual age.

Before I try to elaborate this double thesis I want to look

at one quite strong objection to my whole enterprise which will be put forward from certain Christian standpoints. Briefly: Protestants will say, "Surely Christ is sufficient for all our needs"; Catholics will say "Surely Christ and his Blessed Mother are sufficient for all our needs". In reply to this I would say that the really continual Christian affirmation is that the word of God, at once *with* God and God in his own right, became man as Jesus of Nazareth, who by his life and death transformed this earth. But this transformation, from sin to justice, from darkness to light did not and does not *coerce* man in any way. It leaves him free, and works out his freedom within the world of this darkness: only now he knows that the light is there for him to appropriate. He must bring light into his own life and into the world around him. In this world man is in the body, and so he must attune himself to the conditions of the body. If I want to go to London from Edinburgh, I do not ask Christ to transport me there, even though I believe that Christ has come in the flesh, and does in fact live in the body, and is everything to me at all levels. This is just part of what the incarnation means, and the Word in Himself and *in me* is subject to the limitations of the flesh. Now man is spirit as well as flesh, and is, in the nature of things, just as much subject, in his spirit, to the conditions of the spirit-world as he is, in his body, subject to the conditions of the material world. It would be just as absurd for him to bypass the world of spirits as to bypass the world of British Rail and the Health Service. Yes, God can work miracles, but the greatest, most tremendous miracle of all is creation itself, including the world of the Celestial Hierarchies with their marvellous scope and power in the universe, and in their direct relationship to man and to this most precious earth. They are part of this mighty harmony of innumerable regions and orders of being, as we too are part of it.

So it was that the Word made Flesh, Jesus of Nazareth, who asked a woman for water when he was thirsty, could also be helped all through his life by the spirits that surrounded him, could be helped by the good spirits as we are, challenged by the evil spirits, as we are. Indeed, we do but understand the half of the Christ story if we see it only in terms of the historical-visible. Rather did the Logos become man at two levels, that of spirit and that of the body; and at least as much happened at the one level as at the other. The Gospels are indeed written from the standpoint of the historical-visible but they are not by any means enclosed by this, as we in our technical age tend to be. So it is that we miss the "openings" into the invisible that come again

and again in the New Testament. These openings accompany Jesus all the way from his conception by the ministry of Gabriel to his ascension when he, so to speak, passed through the threshold of these openings and the "two men in white" spoke to the disciples of the Second Coming.[4] Those who refuse to open to this world of openings do but read the half of the New Testament, and so reading it, miss much more than half of its atmosphere and scope. That is one reason why our theology today rarely causes the reader's heart to burn within him as he reads.

4. A Very Present Help

And now at last to my double affirmation concerning the present helpfulness of angels.

First, I say that the contact with the angels can transform the life of the individual Christian. All I have been saying from the standpoint of theology, and, earlier, from the standpoint of Christian traditions, should give a substantial background to this claim, enough perhaps for me to say: "Try it for yourself". This means giving angels a place in your inner life of prayer and meditation, in that activity wherein the mind seeks its own centre, where it reaches inwards to the Source. When Jesus uses the words "in the heavens" in his invocation of his Father and ours, he is not using a merely decorative phrase. In the context of the New Testament (and the Old) the heavens had a definite meaning, referred to a special region with its own atmosphere and its own citizenry. Jesus did not address a lonely figure in an empty sky, the First Mover of Aristotle or the One of Plotinus (though, indeed, it is we rather than the Greeks who have isolated the God of the philosophers). He addressed the Lord of Spirits, the *I am* whose angels stayed the hand of Abraham, and appeared in the Burning Bush (Acts 7, 30), the Lord who rides above the Cherubim, the Lord God of Hosts. All this and more is expressed in that first invocation of "our Father who art in the heavens", and leads us to open ourselves to the ever-present household of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.[5] It must be remembered that we are free, and that our freedom is sacred in the eyes of the Father and his angels. So we are given only what we freely ask for in the full sincerity of filial asking. But if we ask, we shall receive.

Here it is worth recalling that when Jesus is being done to death he does not say: "The Father can save me" but rather does

he say: "I can ask the Father and he would send his angels to save me". (Matt. 26, 53.) It is the Father we "ask", and all prayer goes on to the Father, yet even here the angels are our helpers in presenting our asking and our adoration. So it is that the angels have an important place in the ancient Christian liturgies, East and West. In the traditional Eucharistic prayer the priest asks that the angel of the Lord may carry the sacrifice to God's altar on high; some of us regret that this invocation has dropped out of the New Catholic Mass Rites in the Second, Third and Fourth Eucharistic Prayer.

All prayer goes to the Father, but this does not at all mean that we cannot contact the good spirits that surround our lives. These beings are as real and as available as our doctors, lawyers, bank managers; indeed they are much more available, for we can contact them merely by opening our minds to them. They cannot, nor do they wish to, change the great lines of our destiny, however seemingly dark this may be at times, but in all else they are constantly and delicately helpful. They are in my experience particularly helpful in matters that concern human attitudes and emotions and human relationships; again and again they clear the air; again and again in speaking with people in distress I have been marvellously helped by them to ask the key question, or open up some line of thought or emotion.

If I were asked to describe the nature of this angelic presence in human relationships and encounters, I would use two words to describe it: *peace* and *transparency.* By peace I do not mean a neutral quality or atmosphere, the mere absence of strife or tension. Rather it is one of the richest and most varied of human dimensions, and I hope to explore it more fully another time. W. B. Yeats speaks of a peace that comes *"dropping slow/ dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings",* and this peace of a quiet island in a dark clear lake in the early morning is indeed special and sacred. The peace in question is quite some distance on the spectrum from that island peace: its best image is the freshness that enters a smoke-filled stifling room when a window is opened, or suddenly swings open. It is the peace in which communication is possible because a closed self opens a little to another person, and so to the whole universe. And the activity by which this happens is imperceptible; the window swings open noiselessly. There is no sense of the extraordinary, of a miracle happening. At least I have found it so; and I find it so. I can only say to you: "See for yourself; open to the world of the angels, not as a game or by way of curiosity, but in all sincerity, and you, too, will find it so". One thing, however, must be said: this is not an easy way to spiritual

power. The only true way to spiritual power is the way of the Cross, the way down into weakness which is the way up into power. The angels were with Christ all the time, all the way, but they did not carry his Cross for him, or save him from weariness, distress, disappointment, and something that was near to despair. Yet he was the light, and the angels were an essential element in that light. Through them we reach towards that same light that has its centre in him.

So much for the presence and place of angels in the life of individual persons, and in personal encounters and relationships. It is an important presence and an important place, but what I want to speak about finally is far more important: it is the presence and place of angels in the cosmos, and especially in Planet Earth. One does not have to be a Nostradamus, or an Edgar Cayce, to see that Planet Earth is facing catastrophe. For the first time in history (as far as we can discern) man can destroy this sure and firm-set earth, can turn all its freshness and teeming fulness of life into a slag-heap. We are left with Isaiah and the son which he named Shear-Yasub which means "a remnant shall be left". No more hope for the future than this one child of catastrophe. Perhaps for all we know Shear-Yasub is already conceived, and we are facing that immense holocaust which will leave but a weak remnant of a civilisation whose final deed of power was to destroy itself. In fact we were within a few minutes of its happening in this month in which I write, June 1980.[6]

In this situation it is clear that everything depends not on the mindless computers but on the minds of the men who control the computer. If we are to avoid this catastrophe we need a change of mind which is also a change of heart. We need a spiritual awakening, a spiritual opening. Now my main contention all along, a contention based on the Christian scriptures and more than amply verified by personal experience, is that man in his spirit lives and moves in a world of spirits. But man is also free, the individual man and the totality of men. The angels will not intervene, *cannot* intervene unless man makes with them vital enabling connections. No angel will reach down to switch off the computer, though such an intervention is possible on the wings of prayer, as when Peter was released from prison. What the angels can do most naturally is to clarify the spirit of man, to open men's minds to the light of God which shines around them. That white light of the Godhead is too much for man; it reaches him through these spirits that are only a little above him. They are the clouds in which Christ is coming; they herald his Kingdom across the centuries and millenia. If he were to come today or

tomorrow the planet would shrivel up before him, and only the few could look on his face. At times the New Testament seems to say just this, but He who comes is infinitely patient and compassionate, and he sends his angels before his face to prepare the way for his coming. But man is free, always free; and in his freedom he can reject or fail to make contact with the angels of God.

One way or another the Christ will come. He will come not in judgment, but in love, but it may happen that he will *seem* to come in judgment so that men wither away in fear and expectation. The Day of the Lord is also the Day of the Angels, as it is the Day of the Woman Clothed with the Sun. Herein is found the only protection for sinful and imperfect men and women. Herein we see the only harmonious way forward for this planet. The alternative is a world purified by catastrophe.

Those passages in the Scriptures which talk of "sendings" and messengers are very profound. One can ask: why does not the Lord come Himself as He is? The reason is that the Infinite beauty, purity and pathos of God is far, far more than man can take. Were it to bear down suddenly on man's ugliness, selfishness and hardness, what would be left of the great majority of men? So we must reach up to the Holy Ones among us here on earth, and to the Invisible Holy Ones of the Angelic Hierarchies. So it is that we must have messengers, that God's relationship with man is by way of "sendings".(7)

That is what an angel is, a messenger of the divine sending, God's fingertips, a touch at once immeasurably firm and infinitely gentle. In a certain general and yet quite real sense all creation is a sending. As I sit here at my window I hear birds singing and trilling and I look at a tree in full greenery. These are messengers from the same divine source as that from which I too have been sent, as Christ has been sent and the Holy Spirit. Between these two orders of sending, the visible and the divine, is the great world of discarnate spirits, the living dead who once walked the earth—these are sometimes called Ministering Angels, by Shakespeare, for instance—and the spirits of the Celestial Hierarchies. They are not a kind of ornamental addition to the Cosmos, but are intimately part of it. Without them man's life is full of emptiness. Without them Christ is forever uncomforted in Gethsemane.

(1) *G. R D. McLean, POEMS OF THE WESTERN HIGHLANDERS. London: S.P.C.K.,* 1961. *In the case of the poem quoted above I made my own translation of the Gaelic text. It is perhaps worth remarking*

that the introductions to all these books are worth reading—that in THE SUN DANCES is by Adam Bittleston of the Christian Community. Carmichael's own introduction is not only informative but, in places, extremely moving. McLean remarks that the poems of the Carmichael collection are superior in strength and freshness to similar collections from Ireland such as Douglas Hyde's RELIGIOUS SONGS OF CONNACHT. I think the reason for this is that Irish Roman Catholicism absorbed and institutionalised the Celtic tradition, whereas in the Scottish Highlands and Islands pockets of the common people resisted the Reformation, and so remained in touch with their far past.

(2) *THE CELTS, Penguin* 1970. *"A beautiful dignity hangs over Irish mythology, and orderliness, a sense of fitness. . . . The heathen Irish erected a spirituality—a spiritual loveliness which comes close to an ideal spiritual existence."*

(3) *See "Sacramentum Mundi," under "Angel." For a more positive approach see Heinrick Schlier's book PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (Burn & Oates, London* 1961), *in the Quaestiones Disputatae series. But Schlier is primarily concerned with the hindering and destroying angels.*

(4) *Is it possible to make any sense of this return of Christ apart from the angelic spirits that will surround it? (Matt.* 16, 27.) *It is presented not as a destruction of earth but as the final and complete opening of heaven into earth, an earth which, as Teilhard has seen, reaches to its own limits. At these limits is the opening, the world of the angels, a world invisibly present all through the New Testament.*

(5) *The Greek of both versions (Matthew and Luke) of the Lord's Prayer has "en tois ouranois" which is "in 'the heavens'," not "in heaven". The Latin and the French get it right.*

(6) *Report from David Cross in "The Scotsman", June* 9, 1980. *"For the second time in a week, America's nuclear forces have begun to move into action after a false computer warning of a Soviet missile attack. On both occasions, the mistake was spotted within three minutes of the false alert and before any armed bombers or missiles had been launched into the air. A spokesman said that the Pentagon were "concerned" but not "alarmed" by the erroneous warning because it had been detected within the relatively short time span of three minutes. He explained that the computer had not been taken out of service after Tuesday's incident in an effort to determine the cause of the malfunction. Test equipment had been attached to the machine and after Friday's false alarm, the Pentagon now knew what was wrong with it. Last November, another false alarm occurred when a test tape simulating a Soviet attack was accidentally fed into a computer at North American Defence Command headquarters in Colorado Springs. The mistake, which relayed the warnings to military commands and federal Government departments in Washington, was blamed on a mechanical hitch, which, it was subsequently claimed, had been corrected."*

(7) *At the source of all "sending" is the Breath of God, the Holy Spirit of God. All the Angels may be seen as breathings of this Eternal Spirit. But the relationship of Pneumatology to Angelology is a separate unwritten chapter of Theology. The cosmic struggle outlined in the Book of Revelations and elsewhere in the New Testament gives an added urgency to what is said below about the planetary aspect of the invocation of the angels.*

Editor's note. (Revd.) Dr. N. D. O'Donoghue is the author of "Heaven in Ordinarie" (T. & R. Clarke Ltd., Edinburgh, £5.95) reviewed in LIGHT, Summer 1980.

A New Vision for All Mankind

L. FRANCIS EDMUNDS

What can the living do for the dead, that the dead in turn may help the living? In regard to such a question, Anthroposophy asks us to consider once again the basic character of human thinking, the capacity of man to live vividly, powerfully in thoughts not resting directly on the world of the senses. It is, after all, only the body which does. The dead are removed from the world of the senses around, but they can still be reached in thought, in sense-free thinking. We can no longer *see* them, but we can think them. If once the truth is realised that in the activity of thinking we are exercising a supersensible member of our being, it becomes only a question of the intensity of the exercise for this activity in the etheric body to translate itself from thinking into a higher seeing, eventually into the faculty of Conscious Imagination as described by Rudolf Steiner. Just because the dead are not wrapped round with a physical body, their supersensible nature can read such thoughts directly in our etheric bodies. With this thought once grasped, we can go forward confidently with the positive work of advancing consciousness on earth to include the living dead. To do so may be the greatest service we can do to our times, the greatest act of healing. Separation through death may thus become an added spur for the achievement of higher consciousness.

In our thinking, says Rudolf Steiner, we are on the borderland of eternity. We think with the etheric body. In thinking we exercise a supersensible activity. It is an astonishing revelation of Anthroposophy that in the exercise of strengthening our sense-free thinking there lies the preparation for an awakening to the etheric world. This becomes even more wonderful in the knowledge that we live in the age of the Etheric Christ—Christ who is for all mankind, the living and the dead. One begins to see in all clarity the tremendous mission of *The Philosophy of Freedom (The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity)* [Rudolf Steiner] as an actual training and preparation for modern man on the way to an awakening to supersensible experience, how it schools and disciplines the faculties required for a free and fully conscious approach to the sources of higher knowledge. And so it is that when someone is removed from the world of the senses, we can still share a life together. We are all of us, without exception, in a position to bring into our thinking Imagination drawn from supersensible experience so that we live in them and they in us,

In so far as we do this, those who are in the spiritual worlds can maintain connection with us.

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Thomas Blackburn

KATHLEEN RAINE

Post Mortem. Rondo Publications Limited, £1.95.
Bread for the Winter Birds. Hutchinson, £6.95.

"Call no man happy until he is dead" is a phrase that has been spoken with many inflections. Thomas Blackburn, who throughout his life had looked hard and unflinchingly at death, makes of those words, in these two collections of poems (*Post Mortem* published shortly before his death and *Bread for the Winter Birds* just over a year after) an affirmation of hope and an assurance of immortality.

I first met Thomas more than forty years ago and have read each volume of his verse as it has appeared over the years—the record of a pilgrimage through the ordeal of incarnation.

Our first meeting was unforgettable. Tambimuttu, editor of *Poetry London,* brought him to see me during the war, at a time when we were both publishing our first poems. I was in my early thirties, Thomas nearly a decade younger. He was strikingly handsome but with a tortured, hyperaesthetic quality; I use a word he himself uses of Gerard Manley Hopkins on whom he has a fine poem beginning "Hyperaesthesia was his faithful wife"; Thomas was writing of what he knew of himself. Perhaps he was drinking too much even then and casting about in Bohemia (as I was myself) for straws to cling to:

I lived a parody; it was sex, rocks, alcohol

(he was also a skilled rock-climber).

What I remember is the startling question this young poet suddenly put to me with the direct thrust typical of the man and of his poems: "And are you not afraid when you think of being put into the ground, and earth shovelled over your face?" Something must have led him to suppose that such charnel matters had not for me those terrors they had for the Jacobean playwrights, about whom he has since written, exposing the fallacy, not to say pathology, of their obsession. But at the time he himself certainly shared it, and I hope I was properly humble in the presence of a horror real enough whatever the reason or

unreason underlying it. But I am glad if for him I stood, however unworthily, for that great company who bear witness to the immortality of the soul. That conversation was, as it proved, an indication of the ways we were both to follow, I into bookish Neoplatonic studies, Thomas on to the battlefield itself, accepting the adventure of the Dark Tower.

He was, when I first knew him, a friend and devoted admirer of Francis Bacon. Later he was to renounce his early wish to emulate as a poet Francis Bacon's work as a painter.

The crumpled sheets of the bed of murder
You showed me how the creases, stains and folds
Make the crime perpetually occur,
The resonance and the mystery of details.

I remember the chaos of cuttings and paint,
The colours on the plate in your studio,
How you called Jesus a queen but very quaint.
I disagreed but agreed with your cult of horror.

And collected pictures in an old scrap book,
A dying drunk, boxers, an addict of heroin,
Many variants on the theme of pain and shock;
I shudder at them now; they were pleasant then.

He explains why he made poems under Bacon's shadow,

Exploiting the terror of bearing humanity—
And relishing—what it was I still don't know,
Something about breaking out of contour into mystery.

I can see now, better (paradoxically) than then what Thomas Blackburn did find in Bacon's total venturing of himself, body and soul, without any of the old charts and no compass but the fallible human heart, upon the dangerous Odyssey of life. Whatever Francis Bacon is he is not small; is perhaps heroic, and so Thomas Blackburn was to prove. But I think he found another master whose blessing, in vision or dream, he did receive shortly before his death, as he describes in a letter:

"So", said the voice, "you have indeed come through. I thought at times it might be intolerable, but now you have grown into the Thou of the Intention". . . . I have relived on the page the frightening and complete blackness. I was led, supported by the Virgilian guide, beneath the hairy scrotum of the King of Darkness, to rock, wan light, sun light, gloria.

Whatever mask the god wore whose initiation he accepted Thomas Blackburn saw at last what Dante saw. I see him, now

that his death has set the seal of wholeness on his life, as one of the very few significant Christian poets of my generation.

Not, certainly, by profession (his clergyman father was what he was running away from) but by lived experience.

We used to meet from time to time, over years, sharing as we did our belief in immortality and, therefore, an interest in esoteric studies. Through his friendship with Wilson Knight Thomas had become interested in paranormal phenomena and once or twice took me to public demonstrations of mediumship. Through his considerable knowledge of the evidence Thomas never made the mistake of imagining the post mortem state to be necessarily a pleasurable one; indeed many of his powerful early poems are terrifyingly demon-haunted; he never underrated the principalities and powers of evil. But in these latest poems he throws back the often-made charge of escapism at those who see the black-out of death as a convenient end to the pain and effort of living.

Very few readers, even now, are likely to take seriously Thomas Blackburn's very well-informed view of the post-mortem state; it is that of most spiritualist circles, based not mainly upon Swedenborg or other literary sources, but on an abundance of evidence which might well convince (Yeats made this point) if people would only look at it.

. . . not in dreams only but in waking vision
My unsleeping eyes grow steadily on
Reflected on a white and roughcast wall
The vital aftermath of any man or woman's funeral.
More vivid colours were there
Than even the Dolomite lightning lighting night here.
It was seeing naked with no eyelid
Since there was no sleep. Some were maladjusted
To death, materialists with no material
And since no deception there, there was no criminal,
Leaving those who would hurt without aim;
Those gathered, grinding, by the river of weeping
For that further birth that is the real dying.

It sounds (apart from the Platonic affirmation of rebirth) remarkably like the teaching of the Church about the Three Last Things! He writes not as an addict of "phenomena" but as a man who has deeply penetrated his own inner worlds, both the heavens and the hells, and who has, like his namesake, himself touched the body of the Resurrection.

In poem after poem he affirms his faith—a faith given

structure by his considerable knowledge of the evidence available, but on the poet's own insights, above all those least demonstrable, even in words, as in "The Authorized Version" he writes:

Remember the words do
Include the silences
And that some words are
Alive in their pauses
The divine can breathe in.
For themes of the spirit
Need gaps to suggest how
No words quite inherit
Themes that supreme are,
So the great words meet
With sound and silence.
They need what is not
Quite said for truth's sake:
And since we're finite
Only the silences
Can suggest infinite
Meetings, humilities.

He moved with a serene joy towards that eternal state of being implict in the Platonic question (or is it an answer?) "for who knows whether to live be not to die, and to die to live?" Of the eternal world the seen world is a metaphor:

. . . behind
That cloud-scape or hinted by it,
And real, so it seems, as my hand
Is more than what clouds are about,
Their gleam being metaphor
Of a different species of light;
Hence my nostalgia.

And now it is midnight
And my bronze Bodhisattva
Stares serenely and smiles;
Who wrought that shape may have known
Of what clouds are metaphor,

Although art ever razor keen
To unskin the ephemera,
May, shifting the skins from a scene,
Lead into nostalgia.

"Fallings from us, vanishings"

Wordsworth knew them and a terror
Which he did not specify.
It is what we are living for
And growing. I mean to die.

In an unwarrantably condescending review of his last book in the *Tablet,* John Heath Stubbs did less than justice, it seems to me, to both the authenticity and the quality of Thomas Blackburn's vision, dismissing his preoccupation with psychic phenomena with the incuriosity of an orthodox churchman. Those for whom the Church is the pointing finger often show little interest in the remoter moon, seem almost afraid of the verities themselves from which indeed the Church is often used as a protection. Or does a lingering Deism still enjoy its comfortable coexistence with a materialist science already on its way out? Someone said that religion is for those who do not know God; Thomas would have none of that, he wanted the living truth and would have nothing less, even at the price of the hells through which his way led him. The paranormal and the spiritual are by no means the same thing, certainly; but it is the same materialist approach that has already emptied the natural world of spiritual meaning that is doing the same for the paranormal (so-called). For Thomas Blackburn both the one and the other were given meaning by the unity of the spiritual universe itself. He had nothing in common with those who seek to explain in physical terms the metaphors of "Its terror and its glory, this limitless world". With Blake, Yeats and Wordsworth (on whom, in *Bread for the Winter Birds* there is a fine poem) he is a part of that reaffirmation of the spiritual nature of man and his universe of whose advent Blake and Yeats are the prophets.

In his quest to the Dark Tower he passed through regions of darkness in which many have really perished. He writes with searing honesty of the alcoholic state, of the wards of State mental hospitals which have only drugs and shock-treatment to offer the questing soul. He learned for himself what our society tells no one (hence so many casualties) that (in Yeats's words) "the soul cannot live without sorrow" and his poem *Pain* goes to the heart of a dangerous fallacy:

If the pain were not bearable
It would not be given us to bear;
At finding excuses not to bear pain I am too plausible,
Trying to dissipate the angst by chemicals into warm air.
Some degree of pain is synonymous with growing,
The real anguish is in the running
From what is ourselves and close as our own breathing;

Take pain into heart and mind and it becomes tolerable,
There is even joy in becoming more mature.

In his last year he received much enlightenment through a Jungian analysis which helped him to accept his own vivid dreams and visions as living intuitions of other worlds as he approached death. In her moving introduction to *Bread for the Winter Birds* his widow, Peggy, describes how Thomas spent his last weeks writing almost without sleep poem after poem and letter after letter in his sense of the urgency of communicating these ever-clearer intimations he had of the holiness of being. These two collections therefore are not, like many last books, the gleanings and afterthoughts of a poet who has already said everything, but a new, late-given, passionate and luminous vision of immortality. They cast, besides, a retrospective meaning upon all that preceded them, completing a story that, had it ended twenty years ago, might have seemed only another brilliant record of a dark journey with no outlet. With his death he completed his work of bearing witness to an imaginative vision of an achieved wholeness.

Ineffable are the stretches of the eternal.
Of being otherwhere and otherwise they foretell
As they approximate by slow footfall.

Nothing now is indifferent to me
Growing into becoming inevitably,
No glass, no more darkly.

See, see. Each hour nearer
To freedom, the constant wayfarer.
Do the changes continue for ever?

A pause. How strange becoming is
Forever farewelling from what was,
Passing histories.

* * * *

If I have written rather of the poet than of his poetry it is because I share his belief that poetry takes its value from the human experience it embodies. The relativization of values which has resulted from rejection of any idea of the objectivity of a spiritual universe has resulted in the acceptance of any and everything which can be called "self-expression" as of equal value. This ultimately leads to the claim (which I have heard seriously made) that the pathological has an equal value as "art", or indeed as an aspect of truth, with what in other cultures and

periods is regarded as wisdom or knowledge; the Gadarene swine have as much to teach us as the one who cast them out. For those who deny a spiritual universe there can, of course, be no spiritual knowledge, and to that pass we have come. Therefore it seems important to consider what Thomas Blackburn has to tell us of his spiritual pilgrimage.

As for technique it can be judged finally only in relation to its fitness to its purpose. Accuracy was what Thomas most valued, "to get words down with extreme accuracy" and his could be deadly. Technical virtuosity for its own sake was never practised by those most noted for it—Hopkins for instance, who was trying for an ever greater exactness. Thomas Blackburn's style has the cutting edge he wanted, a scalpel-like steely keenness. Because for him all is metaphor, nature and the simple events of domestic life and friendship give him the only symbols he needs. He is not a decorative poet. His sentences are written in straightforward grammatical order, without inversions, parentheses, padding or rhetoric. He only occasionally soars (as does Vernon Watkins, another poet of the wholeness of death and life with whom he invites comparison) into that inspired eloquence in which we recognise the utterance of that "other" mind which transcends the empirical ego.

It would not be true to say that these poems are better work than many in the earlier volumes; but they are a complete statement of an exploration of the imaginative insights of the poet's approach to death. They ensure his place within that long-submerged tradition of religious verse of which Vaughan and Traherne and Herbert were the bearers.

Thomas Blackburn was an occasional contributor to LIGHT. (See Summer 1975, Summer 1976, Autumn 1977.—Ed.)

The Way of Initiation

RONALD FRASER

What insight of Reality did Jesus give mankind? What was the pattern of living he enacted and we must enact if we are to transcend the earth-experience? He taught and enacted a way of initiation, entry into transcendent reality, identity between Sun-man and Sun. No easy way, not at all. It exacts the most searching tests and calls for all we've got.

There is a mode of knowing in which the knower is what he knows. Every advance in this mode is an initiation and we have to gain it for ourselves, not only in daunting situations of imaginative experience, but in the smallest crisis or commonplace situation that life presents at home, in office or factory, or in public activity. The process begins at once when we begin to practice truths we have surmised; a prolonged, bitter challenge to faith, patience, will and conscience, one in which every least incident comes to be a part, for there is no situation, however commonplace, no motion of sense or thought, that cannot be turned to advantage in this connection. In pain and sickness we can try to make our sun-self prevail and thus advance purgation of the corruptible body. A slight disregarded, a disappointment accepted, a crisis handled with detachment and insight: all this is a means to initiation. Daily life can be an unremitting, remorseless test of our emotional, mental, spiritual quality. The process may lead to revelation when light breaks in the moment of death.

It may be in point to remark that austerities are not recommended, certainly not for their own sake. Rule I is "Love thy neighbour as thyself", thyself as thy neighbour. One doesn't reduce the neighbour to a bag of bones. We are not of course to pamper ourselves or each other. The bodies of flesh, sense and mind must be fed, with discretion, with such food as is wholesome; with music, poetry, painting, if such nourishment is acceptable; with such facts as are true, such thoughts as are creative, such visions as our meditations on the Sun open to us. There must be purgation of sense and mind. There must be fasting in heart, absence of participation. But a life that calls now and again for supreme effort doesn't ask us to maltreat its agent, simply to keep fit.

When Gautama Buddha undertook a course of austerities such that he lost the look of a man and gained no enlightenment he abandoned them.

We are concerned then with the four initiations of Water, Air, Fire and Earth.

Water

There are times of special stress, private or public crisis, which only those in charge of their emotions can handle. The water element in us can be so still as to reflect heaven, so turbulent as to reflect no readable image. If we can face disconcerting surprises, examine our secret urges or the "contents of our unconscious" with detachment, submit it all to the light,

there will follow well-being at all levels. A still hearts says "peace" and peace reigns.

Most of us communicate our anxieties, infect others with them. Jesus, foreknowing the critical hours, waited, tranquil, restful. Sufficient to the day was the evil thereof. The water-initiate doesn't worry or plague others with his anticipations, in advance. First of the great initiations Jesus enacted before men was the water-initiation. Light took possession of him at baptism; he was no longer himself but the Presence; his ministry began and a voice told the people, "This is my Son". For us it means that when the emotion-body, with its tendency to fear and anger, disordered thought, ill-considered action, is under control, when at last the noises of our own mind-sense die down, Light will speak in our ear.

Air

After this Jesus went into the desert, the arid, logical world of discussion and argument, to try conclusions with his own thoughts.

As a rule, when we have been caught up out of ourselves the mind does all it can by question, criticism and donnish wit to destroy what we have imagined and seen, to deter us from a course that will lead as it were to its own supersession in consciousness. The mind of Jesus immediately suggested that he use the powers now reposed in him for his own ends and indeed the world lay at the feet of a man equipped as he was. He answered with the voice of Light. There would be no seeking place and influence, no taking insensate risks on the assumption that his destiny would look after him.

There must be no substitution of man-invented subtleties for truth in the heart, no turning of "isms" into "bread"; nothing but obedience to the will and purpose that now possessed him, spontaneous and joyous obedience.

Pharisaic, legalistic, arrogant, self-satisfied, the mind will destroy the nonsensical infant that is born of the woman in man, though itself the father. It will crucify the real on behalf of what it calls reason. Worship me, it will say. I am infallible. When we have learnt to recognise such argument for what it is, a device of the Shadow, we shall be air-initiate.

Thought-control is of high importance in an age that is bringing techniques of suggestion to a fine art. It is of special importance when the psychic apparatus is becoming more sensitive, for attempts will be made to deceive by specious reasoning.

Fire

Having learnt to control emotion and thought the initiate may feel bleak. He will seek to bring the cosmic fire into head and heart. With this in view he must open himself to the light to the extent he can suffer it . . . even Jesus withdrew to the mountain sometimes, where angels ministered to his need. For the brightness increases. And in due course, tuned, often meditating on the Sun, often aware of it, seeing it, in his own heart, he will feel a change. When Moses came down from the mountain of meditation, emerged from trance, he had to veil his face. When Jesus resorted to the mountain, went into *samadhi,* his raiment glistened and his face was so bright that the three companions, themselves initiate, feared what their eyes, sleep-laden, were shown. One day this light will transfigure even those who now sleep the death-sleep, sunk in unconsciousness. One day we, too, outcome of what we now are, will radiate light as the Sun does.

Whereas at water-baptism a voice said, "This is my Son", at fire-baptism the words, "Hear ye him", were added. Fire-baptism empowers a man to speak in the name of Christ.

Earth

Now comes the crowning test, the test for which all else is rehearsal, crucifixion, self-surrender, on which follows resurrection, release from the earth-experience, ascension. This involves the surrender of all our "possessions", all we hold precious, our self, its tastes, its feelings, its thoughts, perhaps even the picture of Fact and cosmos it has built up so painfully, and of course all claim to merit.

We must die quietly. An accomplished yogi, Jesus showed the manner of it. While the thieves either side of him—thought that blasphemed, intuition that belongs with him in Paradise—suffered, he was away on the mountain teaching some who were close to him how the mystery of crucifixion is to be understood. A man who can retire into himself at such a conjuncture is untouched by any pain his enemies think to inflict. If we give way to self-pity we are vulnerable. Few can withstand the excruciations to which in these inventive days they are submitted; but if we can be tranquil in suffering, live our inward life just the same, we do something to prepare for that last anguish when self will yield and phoenix rise from its flaming nest.

Then let the rich man die to his riches, the poor man to his

mind. We mean a progressive
their mode of experience; an alternative prac
what is felt is seen, what is seen is felt; an effort without
or other stimulant to bring the whole psychic apparatus into play;
an attempt by creative imagination, our means of truth, to
penetrate the concentric worlds that centre in our own heart
and to gain identity with Fact at all levels. We mean a sustained
preoccupation with reality; a reaching in to our true self, our
conscience at the subtlest it can attain, in search of insights; an
effort of the whole life towards fuller consciousness. Meditation
is an indispensable discipline for the spiritual life and a useful
one for the secular. The exercise, together with the diurnal
effort at conscious and creative living, nourishes the means of
progress, awakens the etheric centres that enable communication
with other worlds in their degrees. As Light flows into the psyche
it trains the mental and emotional faculties at the same time as
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Prayer

Prayer, sometimes mantramic, creates the conditions in which agents of grace can work, speak or appear; made selflessly, it opens us to power, wisdom and light. Prayer made in a petitionary sense is apt to be answered and those who engage in it without thought as to what it is wise to seek may be sorry. Prayer as an
- of faith, an effort of identification, never fails to stimulate
- nor will its effects be absent from circumstance

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presentation of bills, which must be met before there is progress, if only in the meeting them. If you're ready to face all that's coming to you, repeat the Lord's Prayer daily with attention to every word. Repeat the 23rd Psalm and it will open the way to enlightenment. Pray to be delivered from ignorance, self-esteem, desire, aversion and the habit of thinking that you are self-sufficient. Pray to that which is more radiant than the Sun, invoking the Sun in you, that Light may become your will and consciousness.

Meditation

Prayer in its aspirant, qualitative phase is an act of meditation. We do not mean an exercise of the fancy or of the mind. We mean a progressive retreat into subtler bodies and their mode of experience; an alternative practice in a silence where what is felt is seen, what is seen is felt; an effort without chemical or other stimulant to bring the whole psychic apparatus into play; an attempt by creative imagination, our means of truth, to penetrate the concentric worlds that centre in our own heart and to gain identity with Fact at all levels. We mean a sustained preoccupation with reality; a reaching in to our true self, our conscience at the subtlest it can attain, in search of insights; an effort of the whole life towards fuller consciousness. Meditation is an indispensable discipline for the spiritual life and a useful one for the secular. The exercise, together with the diurnal effort at conscious and creative living, nourishes the means of progress, awakens the etheric centres that enable communication with other worlds in their degrees. As Light flows into the psyche it trains the mental and emotional faculties at the same time as it affords vision. A method of arriving at truth by adjustment and concentration of our reflective powers, it is our most economical resource in any situation. We proceed from level to level. The writer once knew a man, a leading brewer, who sat at his window every morning and meditated his day's work. Some proceed to the astral world, where fair landscapes are seen, symbolic events enacted, exalted spirits encountered; others on to the intuitive-mental, where meanings, qualities, are experienced; to the celestial, where once in a lifetime perhaps but it changes life once for all, we may for a flashing instant gain identity with our Source and Being. Of course this isn't easy for those who are not contemplative by temperament. But the man of affairs as well as the contemplative will find that stillness, one-pointedness and communion with reality bring profit at all levels.

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poverty, the agnostic to his ignorance and all of us to whatever binds us to earth.

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MEANS OF GRACE

Healing

For what shall we be more thankful than the grace of pain?

Jesus asked, "Whether it is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Take up thy bed and walk?" The cause of sickness often lies in the long past and there is no lasting cure until what was done has been undone. One day doctor, surgeon and psychiatrist will consult clairvoyant and astrologer for purposes of long-term diagnosis, that treatment may be directed to the cause that survives in the soul and *I* may be helped to expiate it by *my* acceptance, *my* suffering.

The blind, the halt, the man whose arm is withered, the dead Lazarus, are psycho-somatics and their troubles symptomise attitudes of mind (a blind man may have the advantage of one who thinks he can see). If even in cases that might seem hopeless Jesus, clairvoyant, saw that the karmic situation permitted it he would say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee; sin no more". Set up no fresh karma, especially in the same kind. Whereon the symptoms would disappear.

No justice in it, that a man should suffer for the sins of a remote "parent"? No justice if he took it on? If I, the soul's agent, drew some part of the soul into the act, shall I not welcome the opportunity to put things right?

The secret of health and healing lies in the use and acceptance of Light. When we can say with full understanding of what it means I am the Sun we can direct the golden radiance to any afflicted part and it will at last change the corruptible into an incorruptible body.

Prayer

Prayer, sometimes mantramic, creates the conditions in which agents of grace can work, speak or appear; made selflessly, it opens us to power, wisdom and light. Prayer made in a petitionary sense is apt to be answered and those who engage in it without thought as to what it is wise to seek may be sorry. Prayer as an act of faith, an effort of identification, never fails to stimulate creativity, nor will its effects be absent from circumstances.

As soon as we set ourselves to the course of prayer, meditation and self-discipline there will be a disheartening

SOME CONCLUSIONS

What does all this amount to? What is proposed?

It is proposed that the cosmic process may be symbolised by the six-pointed star that results from the intersection of two right-angled triangles, one apex-downward for the real descending into the actual, the other apex-upward for the immortal longings of reality imprisoned in the creature. Man takes part in this by virtue of the Flame in him. Is it possible to mineral, vegetable, animal? May we perhaps assume that when stone reaches perfection in the diamond, the plant in a rose, this is in some way an ascension of mineral or vegetable principle into its ideality? That the animal principle is destined to reach its perfection in man? As long as we fail to achieve this in ourselves snake and insect will bite and tiger devour. While men kill animals they will kill one another.

It is further proposed that the whole duty of man is to become what he really is; to surrender will and consciousness to the will and consciousness that imagined man and cosmos into being. To do this he must admit his personal nonentity and live by the woman in him, the intuition or insight that is in affinity with the Flame. A great part of the work must be done on earth. Jesus, the Light and the Word, enacted the way of it. Will he "Come again"? He is here now, at work in our heart and consciousness, and may soon show himself openly.

We are apt to suppose that to lose ourself is to lose everything. Self watches its own decease in tears . . . how can there be bliss in which "I" am not an ingredient? Some feel discouraged by the aeonic perspective, their seeming loneliness. But timelessness is at work in us, reaching for some new quality of experience, and we are never separate from the Identity except when we shut ourselves up in ourselves.

What we have put forward makes light of tragedy. It may be distasteful to any who prefer cosmos as a sphinx with a smirk and no answers, obnoxious to such as love miseries, offensive to those who erect man into a god without any idea of man as he was intended. Many would feel deprived if it were shown that there is no call for our chagrin; that our grief and self-congratulation have as much grace as a child's bawlings and boastings. Man is in fact the scene and deliverance of an immensely signicant drama in which darkness consumes itself

while light ever increases. All nonsense? Once we hear Krishna's flute in the woods nothing else makes sense.

(From Changing Consciousness, C.P.S. Paper 3, now out of print.)

A Dream of Truth

THETIS BLACKER

(This dream took place at a time when the dreamer felt that she and a close friend were both under psychic attack.—Ed.)

THE MARVELLOUS RING

I dreamed that I was floundering in the Aegean Sea, my ship having been wrecked upon the back of the Aspido Chelone. I had, it seemed, been floating and swimming for many hours, praying for rescue. The water luckily was warm, else I would surely have died from exposure and cold. At last, towards evening I was espied by the crew of a small boat which drew near. I was hauled out of the sea and thus saved.

The people aboard this vessel had come from one of the nearby islands and were now travelling to another island for the wedding celebration of a member of their family. They took me with them to the island of their relative, but when we arrived ashore and found ourselves amidst the festive wedding family, I saw that I was not really welcome. I was bedraggled and barefoot, my hair undone and sticky with salt, and I wore nothing except a torn cotton shift. My rescuers told me that they wished they could ask me to join the wedding party, but as I was not one of their family, unfortunately they could not do so. They had been kind to me on the journey, and now they gave me a little food, enough for one meal, as a token of their good will. I thanked them for bringing me safely to shore and departed.

Knowing that my ragged appearance made me no longer acceptable in company, I had left the party and wandered away on the hot, dusty road from the village. After a few miles I sat down by the wayside and ate the food I had been given. I realised that now I was totally alone. I had no money, I had no possessions, no home, no family, no one to turn to. I looked down at my bare, dusty feet and my thin, ragged shift, and I knew that now if I were to survive, I must do so through using my strength and talents as best I could, and so earn enough food to keep

me alive But what should I do? What could I do? Who would employ such a wretched, shabby creature as myself? I walked on and on through the heat of the day. Then as evening approached, I came to the outskirts of another village. I would ask for work here. But what work could I do? What could I do that other peope could not do better than I? I possessed no special talents, I possessed nothing. As I said this to myself I caught sight of my right hand. And there I saw something I had forgotten about. On my third finger I wore a marvellous ring. I had aways worn it, and because I had always worn it, it had become so much part of me that I had forgotten that it was there. I had forgotten its value, I had forgotten its power. But now, as I looked at it, I realised that although I possessed nothing else in the whole world, I possessed, in this ring, something infinitely rare, something immeasurably precious. This ring was unique. There was none other exactly like it in the whole world. It was perhaps the most precious ring in the whole world. Yet it was precious not only for its beauty and the rarity of its single jewel stone, but for its power. I remembered (and it seemed that I was being told for the first time) that this ring gave me the power to see the true nature of things, and the authority and ability to tell of them. Now I knew how I would earn the food to keep me alive. I would go into the villages and I would tell stories to the people there. I would tell the stories of the true nature of things, and in return for these stories the people would give me food and drink.

This is what I did.

* * * *

The next part of my dream emerged after what seems to have been a gap of time. About three years had passed by, during which period I had gone from village to village and town to town telling stories, marvellous and mysterious stories, with the power of my ring. Wherever I went the people were delighted by my story telling. They had never heard (except it seemed in a long forgotten childhood) such tales before. I would tell them the real story of the things they knew and the places they knew. They would listen enthralled, and when I had finished the story they would exclaim that although they had seen that tree, and had fetched water from that stream, and had rested upon that rock, and had looked into that piece of sky every day and every night of their lives, they had never before known how wonderful was that tree, that stream, that rock or that piece of sky. They would thank me and give me food and drink, and offer me lodging, and sometimes much more. Sometimes they would offer me

money for my ring, for everyone could see the marvellous jewel upon my right hand, and as I told my stories everyone could also see the rarity and value of this, my only possession. Gradually the fame of my stories spread, and the fame of my ring also. Yet I would never accept more than food and drink and a night's lodging from anyone, and I had refused all offers, some of which had been very great, for my ring.

* * * *

This second part of my dream came as I was travelling along the north coast of the island. I was surrounded by several close comrades. My friends were arguing with me. I had been offered an enormous sum, equivalent to more than 3 million pounds, by a very rich collector, who wished to buy my ring from me.

"If you only agree to sell it," one of my friends was arguing, "you will be able to buy a big house by the sea. You will be able to keep servants and so be waited on hand and foot. You will be able to fill your house with beautiful things; you will be able to entertain on a grand scale, and you will be able to buy whatever you want and live at ease for the rest of your life."

"But I will have lost the most precious thing of all. I will have lost the only thing I really want or need."

"Look at your shabby dress and the discomfort you live in," another friend protested. "You would be able to dress superbly and then you could look wonderful. And you could sleep in a soft, cool bed instead of on hot, straw mattresses in just anybody's hut."

"However rich my clothing, without my ring I would be poorly dressed. And however soft and cool my bed, without my precious ring, my sleep would be like death, for I would be given no dreams."

My friends argued on with increasing vehemence, trying to persuade me to sell my ring. This I steadily refused to do. At last, however, my friends told me:

"It is for your own good that we want you to sell it. If you refuse, we know for certain that already there are people who plan to steal it from you. You cannot possibly protect yourself, and, while you still wear that ring, you are in perpetual danger. If you sell it now, you will at least have an immense fortune, but if you refuse, the ring will be taken from you in any case, and then you will have nothing, nothing at all."

Reluctantly I realised that what my friends told me was true. Yet I could not possibly consent to sell my ring, for if I did, my life, however luxurious, would be meaningless. I asked my friends to help me, and they agreed.

The third part of this dream took place in the evening of the day of our discussion. My companions and I had evolved a plan. I had wanted to ask for police protection, but my friends knew that one of the officers in the police force was in league with the criminals who were plotting the theft of my ring. Our plan was to work through this corrupt officer and, by asking for protection, ensure that the ring was stolen. But the ring to be stolen would be a false one.

A fair was to take place at the edge of the village that night and I was expected to be there narrating my stories. My friends learned that the thieves were planning to surround and attack me under cover of darkness, at the moment when I would be leaving the fair. It was expected that by then most of the crowd would be drunk and sleepy with festivity, and should any commotion occur, no one would pay much attention. My companions and I therefore went to the police and asked to see the officer whom we knew to be corrupt. This man had pretended on many occasions to be particularly friendly towards us. We told him that a comrade, overhearing a conversation in one of the taverns, had learned that an attempt was to be made to steal my ring at the fair. We asked the officer to ensure that police would be hidden amongst the revellers, so that the thieves might be caught when the theft was attempted. Cordially the corrupt fellow agreed to take every precaution in order to safeguard me. We thanked him and were about to leave when I turned, as if suddenly changing my mind and said:

"No, no, after all I shall not go to the fair. It is too dangerous. But I suggest that all my friends go as planned, and that they behave as if I too were there. In this way you should be able to spot the thieves. But I myself will not go. Instead I think I will spend the evening quietly in the old school, staying there until everything is over."

The officer replied that this was an excellent idea, but he added that I must make no sound while in the school, lest my presence there should be discovered.

After we left the police station, we knew that this corrupt officer would lose no time in contacting the thieves and informing them of my plan and of my whereabouts. As night approached, I secretly took off my marvellous ring, entrusting it to my closest friend who buttoned it safely away inside a pocket. I then placed upon my finger the false ring, a ring which looked not unlike my own, but which was neither old nor powerful. I intended to spend

the evening alone in the empty school, but Rosamond Lehmann (one of my friends in this dream as well as in life) insisted on staying with me. She and I would offer no resistance when the thieves came to overpower us and steal the false ring. We entered the empty, old school, Rosamond leading the way. She was, like myself, barefooted and she wore only a pale blue cotton shift. As she walked up the steps in front of me, I felt how vulnerable she was, and I began to fear lest she might be hurt in the forthcoming attack. Yet I believed that the thieves would not hurt us physically, if we allowed the ring to be taken without resistance. Rosamond and I climbed a flight of stairs to an upper chamber where we sat and waited. This room was dismally empty of furniture except for two upright chairs on which we sat. In one corner a little green curtain was drawn across a washbasin. We talked very quietly as we waited. The light grew dimmer, but as it faded, I saw, for the first time, something glowing on Rosamond's right hand. I looked more closely, and then I saw that she wore a marvellous ring, similar to my own.

"Rosamond", I cried in surprise. "You are wearing a great ring!"

"Of course," she replied, "I always wear it. I have worn it ever since I was born. It is my birthright."

"But you should not be wearing it now," I exclaimed in fear, "the thieves will take it from you!"

"No!" Rosamond cried, "they cannot have it. I will not let it go."

Her ring was so much part of her, she had always been so used to wearing it, that she had forgotten the danger of its value.

"You must hide it, they will wrench it from you! Quickly! Quickly!"

As I spoke I heard the sound of a door below us opening, and stealthy footsteps moving up the stairs.

Desperately we looked about us. I glanced at the wash basin to see if a hiding place could be there. Then Rosamond said:

"I cannot take it off. It will not come off. It is my birthright."

Then I knew, at all costs I must defend her and her ring. I stood in front of her, trying to hide and protect her and I turned to face the stairs. As the masked thieves entered the upper chamber I awoke.

Letters to the Editor

From Canon I. R. Kirkpatrick

You may be interested to know how I came to subscribe to LIGHT, which I value greatly. Years ago after I left Shannon and went to Loughrea I took over a very dismal, dirty, dilapidated church. When I took off the dirty, moth-eaten frontal from the altar what do you think I found? A scrap of paper, obviously torn from a magazine with the title LIGHT. I had never heard of it. But obviously it had to do with matters psychic and at that time I was much concerned about such matters and had reached a sort of dead end. Anyhow, I made enquiries about a magazine of that name from Eason of Dublin and lo and behold in due course I received a copy. It was exactly what I needed to help me on my way (I hope) and since that day I look forward to each quarter's copy.

But there is a little sequel. Needless to say we cleaned up the church and began to hold weekly Services. About a year later I went on holiday and the Archdeacon kindly took the Service for me. Later when we met and I had thanked him for helping me out, he said, "But what have you done to that church? I have known it for years and always hated going into it. But this time when I opened the door I stopped in my tracks for it seemed to me that I was confronted by a blaze of light; and I don't mean the new carpet and the fresh paint."

IVAN R. KIRKPATRICK.

The story that Robert Browning caught D. D. Home cheating* is disposed of by a letter he wrote following the seance he attended at Ealing, discovered years later in his correspondence at Yale and published by Betty Miller in *Cornhill* in 1957. He described how the table had reared up, yet ornaments and the lamp on it had stayed in place: how Elizabeth's dress had bellied out; and how a hand had appeared, moved about, and eventually picked up a wreath and placed it on Elizabeth's head. He had also felt himself being touched with "a kind of soft and fleshy pat". "I don't know at all", he wrote, "how the thing was done". Later, Browning was to become so paranoid about Home that he may have come to believe he had exposed the medium, as his son claimed he did; but the letter makes it clear that he did not.

BRIAN INGLIS.

* *See LIGHT, Centenary Number, Winter 1980. Ed.*

"Whosoever shall Smite Thee on the One Cheek . . ."

Initiatic Teaching of the Fraternité Blanche Universelle

OMRAAM MIKHAEL AIVONHOV

IT is said in the Gospels: "Whosoever shall smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also". May all Christians forgive me, what I am going to say will be beyond their wildest imaginings, and the future will prove me to be right. Certain precepts that were good in the past, are good no longer, nor are they efficient for now or the future.

These words of Jesus do not mean that we should remain passive under insults and injury, submitting and enduring all our lives and then passing away. Maybe that was how they were understood, but I will prove to you that it was not the meaning intended. To be passive, submissive, allowing oneself to be massacred—if you are unenlightened, it is the only thing for you to do. .But this philosophy of the feeble and ignorant should not go on forever. Nowhere is it written that spiritualists, sages, Initiates, Sons of God should remain eternally submissive, enslaved and defeated, so that the idiotic and wicked may always be triumphant. For the moment that is the way it is because humans have lost their divinity, they have lost the solar force, fire, warmth, light and life, and, as they have lost these things, they are obligatorily mistreated and defeated. It has been said: "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted, it is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden underfoot of men". Well, yes, if you lose your savour, you will be trodden underfoot by humans until you find it again. There is no decree saying that you must always be trodden underfoot, but since we have fallen, since we have gone away from God, we have lost our power and now we are at the mercy of violence and dishonesty.

When Jesus was speaking, humans were meant to develop virtues and qualities they didn't have: forgiveness and mercy. At that time there was only the law of justice: eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. The new moral laws that Christ brought were to teach men to develop certain qualities. Always ready to answer with violence, throwing stones, wielding knives, they were to earn another way of answering, a nobler way, more lofty, with humility, love, patience and grandeur of soul. This is the meaning of Christ's words. Yes, but what he said for that epoch was not

intended to last eternally. He is here again, now, to say: "There is still another, better way, a new course of action: when you have been treated unfairly, you should retort with such intelligence, such force of character, such knowledge, wisdom, light and warmth, that your enemy will be struck down, blinded, by the power of your light". Struck down, that is to say transformed! Not killed, not annihilated, but reborn! Instead of killing him, you bring him life, that is you bring him to God. If you can do that, you are a true hero, a real Son of God".

Why always allow our enemies to triumph over us? We should not kill and we should not do them harm, but neither should we accept to be eternal losers. We must get to work and train ourselves to become like the sun, filled with such light that with their foolish and cruel weapons, they are too bedazzled to fire the gun or draw the knife. First you blind them, and then you open their eyes as Christ did with Saul on the road to Damascus when Saul was on his way to massacre the Christians. A flash of light and he was left blinded. And Saul became Paul. Suppose you manage to paralyse someone for a few minutes; afterwards you help him recover . . . will he go on trying to massacre you? The new philosophy, dear brothers and sisters, is not to remain weak, at the mercy of the violent and cruel but to become like the sun, so that they neither reach you nor tarnish you; when they come too near, you melt them as though they were wax.

We have not achieved this glory, this luminosity, because the idea has never occurred to us. We have embraced weakness; we have taken refuge in foolish philosophers advising us to turn the other cheek, the other side. Well, you can offer any side you wish, it won't do any good, you will not stop your enemies from attacking you; in the end they will assassinate you. There is another way of understanding: the other cheek, the other side, is the other side of you, yourself, your spiritual side, where power is, and light. Jesus showed the other side to his enemies. He said: you are able to imprison this physical body, you can crucify it, but I will show you the other side, sublime and indestructible. I will show you how to rebuild the Temple in three days. Now go ahead and strike. He showed the other side and the whole earth was transformed. He showed the divine not the earthly side and he was resuscitated!

And now Christians and spiritualists must understand that they should unite throughout the world instead of letting themselves always be massacred by evil forces, by materialistic ways of thinking and behaving, always saying: "Amen, amen", they

submit. . . . No, they must now get together, because they have a chance of transforming the world, of reestablishing the Kingdom of God on earth. It is no longer the time to say: "Jesus taught us that we should be victims in order to become heroes and martyrs". In the past, yes, they could not do otherwise because they were not yet able to retort in a sublime and divine manner. But now is the time to show their power of spirit with wisdom and knowledge and love in their actions and their comportment. That is the Christian's real force, not to be forever wretched and sickly and feeble, timid and fearful. If those are Christian qualities, then I am the first to say that evil will never be eliminated on earth by Christians.

We must be strong, powerful, dynamic, active, impetuous and even violent, but with another kind of violence, not in the way we understand it on the physical plane. If it is poorly understood, Christianity will not do anybody any good. True Christianity means to be well armed, but not with the usual arms, of course, and when attacked, to show the other side. This other side is a fully armed side, not weak and foolish, but this side has never been explained.

From: Complete Works COSMIC MORAL LAWS, Vol. XII, pp. 267-270.

Book Reviews:

Paradise Found: Reflections on Psychic Survival. Arthur Guirdham. (Turnstone Press Ltd., 1980. £4.50 paperback.)

By coincidence or serendipitous synchronicity, just as I had finished *Paradise Found* and was mentally wrestling with the problems of Dualism, a letter arrived from an old friend to say, inter alia: "Arthur Guirdham's case (from his books *A Foot in Both Worlds,* etc.) is most impressive. I've just got his last book *Paradise Found.* It teems with suggestions. He is an unashamed dualist. I am one with qualifications." And there's the rub; one would need to be sheltered and blinkered not to observe the conflict of good and evil and to conclude that this world is a battleground of two opposing forces; but are there Two opposing ultimates or is there One unifying principle? Either way the philosophical problems are immense, and if my friend is a qualified Dualist, he is also a qualified Monist.

Arthur Guirdham does not minimise the difficulties, nor does

he purport to offer abstract intellectual argument of pros and cons. He offers in lucid and telling words his own experience of a lifetime—of more than one lifetime—and for him Dualism is plain and stark. "What we have to accept is the certainty of defeat in this world, but that is no tragedy. . . ." The words, would you say, of an optimist? Each paradoxical phrase or sentence—and you would be hard put to it to find any page without its paradox—sends the mind questing, so "teems with suggestions" is no exaggeration. Perhaps the most outrageous paradox, at first blush, is to have called the book *Paradise Found.* The thesis, or a large part of it, is that to emanate goodness is to become the target for the enemy, the power or powers of evil. *Not* to emanate goodness is to surrender to the enemy. Yet the title is justified and satisfying when one reads to the end, even if one concludes that Arthur Guirdham, too, is dualist "with qualifications".

He is scathing about St. Paul, about the Church and about male priesthood; thirteenth-century experience has burned deep. The scars are there and still ache, though the twentieth-century doctor is both wise and kind, with every charity for those many to whom he ministers. I should love to hear the dialogue when Paul and he explain themselves each to the other; I believe, though, that the last sentence of the book will, in the event, hold good at such meeting: "We emanate light rather than explanation", and to see the shining will be enough, without words.

Yet, final paradox, Arthur Guirdham's words are marvellously strung and I loved reading this book.

EDWIN BUTLER.

The Island. Arthur Guirdham. (Neville Spearman, £4.95.)

One has long ago learnt to expect surprises from this distinguished, prolific and controversial author; but his latest work is an entirely new departure—extending even to a total change of style. Dr. Guirdham is in general a sober stylist, inclined to heaviness; and I have sometimes felt that the rather lush passages of natural description he is wont to insert stick out awkwardly from the context. But this lengthy, closely-packed narrative pours out in a torrential flow, with a poetic exuberance, as if some being, all masculine youth and energy, were re-living in vivid detail his memories of a primitive, a pagan world. And this is precisely Dr. Guirdham's claim. Not fiction, he insists; he is not, he insists, deluded. This is the actual, recollected life of a young man (a former self) who lived in 1250 B.C. on an island near Crete, and perished in an earthquake (nothing to do with

Santorini) at the age of twenty-three. He wrote it in three weeks, and says of it (I quote with permission from a letter to me): "It was my first prolonged experience of far memory in my own right, and was accompanied by an intense sharpening of my senses, particularly my visual sense". He could, he adds, see the island more clearly than places recollected from his youth in Cumberland.

The story is penetrated with sensuous magic. The supernatural is an unquestioned element in daily life. Eroticism has sacred attributes and rituals, as well as profane indulgences. Both are explicitly yet delicately dwelt on. The Mother Goddess appears, intervenes potently but non-commitally, according to the habit of Grecian Deities. There is a striking account of a visit to Eleusis and its (then incipiently decadent) Mysteries. The description of the approaching fatal earthquake makes an almost overwhelming impact. This, says the author, was the most dramatic manifestation of the power of evil in Nature; and Eleusis saw the earliest clear-cut manfestation of Dualism—that heretical cosmology to whose resurrection Dr. Guirdham and his intimately associated group of psychics are dedicated.

ROSAMOND LEHMANN.

Wholeness and the Implicate Order. By Professor David Bohm. (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, 222 pp., £8.95.)

Professor Bohm is a theoretical physicist of considerable eminence. In this book he approaches one of the fundamental problems of philosophy from the direction of quantum theory and relativity. This old problem is customarily traced back to Plato. Before then Greek culture was built on the immediate reality of sensory perception. Plato, in his well-known simile of shadows seen by men in a cave, started a new school of thought: that reality was to be found within the soul, not in the world. In the centuries that followed philosophers puzzled about the human soul and its relation to God, not its relation to the outer world of common experience. This line of thought held sway till the sixteenth century when Descartes extended it by taking as his starting point the triangle—God, the perceived world, and the soul. What has become contemporary science, which dates back to Descartes, banished God and discussed the polarity between mind and the outer world—the *res cogitans* and *res externa* of philosophic jargon. Hence arose the puzzle of how immaterial Mind could interact with material Matter. Professor Bohm brings his impressive knowledge of theoretical physics to bear on aspects

of this problem. He shows with great erudition that quantum physics and relativity imply a *totality of existence,* in other words that matter and consciousness are an unbroken whole.

Bohm acknowledges briefly the convergence of this line of thought with that of the East. He writes: "The notion that the one who thinks (the Ego) is at least in principle completely separate from and independent of the reality he thinks about is of course firmly embedded in our entire tradition. This notion is clearly almost universally accepted in the West, but in the East there is a general tendency to deny it . . .". In Eastern religions maya is the great unity, a unity which can only be approached by removing veils, one by one, that obscure it from the vision of immature Man. This is a theme that has had many noble expressions in literature, particularly in poetry; also in the accounts given by some mystics of their experiences. Perhaps this book will help to remove some of the veils that now narrow the vision of contemporary science.

Wholeness and the Implicate Order is not easy reading for those unversed in theoretical physics, but it would be wrong to undervalue it on that account. There are many paths to increasing awareness. Maybe most readers of *Light* will find other paths more congenial to them. But, as so many people today look to scientists in the same way as the people of past ages looked to priests, such books as this are to be warmly welcomed. They will help to widen the bounds of scientific orthodoxy.

KELVIN SPENCER.

The Theory and Practice of Astral Projection. Anthony Martin. (The Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, England. £1.00.)

All over the world and throughout historical times, people have claimed to experience on occasion a separation of their personality from their physical body. Such out of the body experiences (OOBE) have been described by saints and mystics, shamans, the critically-ill, psychic experimenters, by western materialists and New Guinea natives. Even if we confine our attention to present day western civilisation, it would appear that as far as OOBE is concerned "there is an awful lot of it about". What leads one to take these accounts seriously is a remarkable consistency in them: for the most part, any collection of cases from widely different sources displays noteworthy similarities. It looks as if we are dealing with a real psychic phenomenon and not the productions of religious dogma, disease, imaginations or the dream factory.

The present book packs a great deal of information into its 95 pages about OOBE. From an introduction in which he argues for the reasonableness of taking the OOBE as a subject worthy of study, Anthony Martin describes in his first chapter the theory of astral projection, giving a number of well-authenticated cases, including the conclusions of well-known researchers such as Dr. Robert Crookall, Sylvan Muldoon and Hereward Carrington. His second chapter gives theories ancient and modern, eastern and western, of the astral body, and includes an interesting section on the doppelgänger phenomenon, with examples. His third chapter on the practice of astral projection contains sections on the experience of astral projection, the first, second and third stages, exercises for releasing the double including visualisation exercises, the use of mantras, specific images and special breathing regimes. It also contains necessary warnings concerning some of the possible hazards of embarking on this type of psychic activity without thorough preparation.

Martin's final chapter contains nine case-histories of OOBE or states of altered consciousness. As a primer in the subject, the book is excellent and should encourage the reader, if he has not already done so, to tackle some of the work listed in the useful bibliography. Martin quotes Hornell Hart and I can do no better than finish similarly: "Far more important, as an ultimate product of this study, should be the stimulation of innumerable readers to weigh the evidence, to seek with all sincerity to free themselves from preliminary prejudices, and to reach their own conclusions in the light of the evidence."

ARCHIE E. ROY.

The Afterdeath Journal of an American Philosopher: the World View of William James. Jane Roberts. (Prentice-Hall Inc., £2.55, paperback.)

If William James did not compose these commentaries from his viewpoint in the afterlife, then this speaking likeness of that perceptive and scholarly intelligence is a work of supernatural artifice worth attention. But what is, what was, William James? What are we? The self is not easily defined: each identity is itself and no other, yet composed of myriad fragments of other identities; all consciousness is interrelated; and these matters are most difficult to explain. Thus Seth, Jane Robert's trance personality, in the introduction.

This book, then, we are told, represents a combination by means of which the communicator (identity inviolable but

components ever in flux) provides his amanuensis with a new focus through which to view reality. A focus, not a communication in the conventionally understood manner, but a situation in which one consciousness (hers) takes the stance of another (his) and views reality from that standpoint. Some are likely to find that definition more confusing than enlightening.

Most of the manuscript was written automatically, over a period of six months or so, the instalments arriving at any odd moment when the author might be otherwise preoccupied. The discourse ranges over the social and intellectual, scientific and religious trends of James's time and an evaluation of his own character, of melancholic cast, in relation thereto. We see the rise of democracy in the States against this background of ideas, the fell advance of medicine and psychology, of science in all its departments, into the materialism where it stands entrenched today. So far the discussion might be read as running commentary on his personal and very extensive afterdeath review.

There follows a section which will have more appeal for many, in which this *focus* gives a fascinating account of his experiences of life after death. Amongst much that may surprise, and much that will amuse, some familiar concepts are to be recognised in a new light, free of cliché, resplendent with conviction: the great cloud of witnesses are watching the play upon the earthly stage for reasons very far-reaching; one becomes aware of the everlasting arms in proportion as one tunes in to the atmospheric presence, which is responsive in due measure but not intrusive (and available here as there. But of course! "If with all your heart . . ." conditional, regulated.) It may come as a shock to learn that the dead don't miss the living; but read on.

It would be impertinent to commend the author of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* for his literary competence, but true to say that the authentic style of this master of the felicitous phrase, lit by gleams of a rather sombre humour, contributes largely to the pleasure of reading this engrossing book. Its range and complexity are reduced to perfect precision in the dedication to "the historic William James and his ever-expanding reality."

At the other end, there is a good index to be appreciated by the careful reader the book deserves.

ELIZABETH GAYTHORPE.

Mantras: Words of Power. By Swami Sivananda Radha. (Timeless Books 1980, illustrated p.b., 129 pp. including index, $5.95.)

Ceremonial Magic: a Guide to the Mechanics of Ritual. By Israel Regardie. (Aquarian Press 1980, 127 pp., p.b. £2.95.)

Here is a handbook on how to attain God-consciousness. The author, a Westerner brought up in the Protestant Church, received her initiation from an Indian guru and now teaches at her own ashram in British Columbia. She writes persuasively, and no less so for the parallels with Christian mystical literature which are explicit or implicit throughout. In this however the systems differ widely, that whereas (in the open tradition at least) the West retains only vestigial forms of the mantra, and no theory of it at all, the East through centuries has sustained a far more cultivated understanding of the power of vibration.

The Swami treats of the subject fully, with examples of mantras including their musical notation for chanting by the aspirant. Exposition of the mantra leads to discussion of yoga and the guru, for mantra is used in Bhakti, the devotional form of yoga or union, and the guru it is who bestows the correct mantra on his disciple and ensures its correct rendering. The guru, revered to idolatry some may be tempted to feel, is not however regarded as a human personality. He has attained God-realisation and now embodies the Divine Principle. With the chosen mantra he imparts power. It is therefore important to find the right guru—we are warned against the charlatans in their plenitude—but, failing his appearance, second best will do in the meantime. God will bless sincerity, commonsense also; whilst candidates are reminded they too must be qualified to enter upon the relationship. (In this connection, what a pity St. Augustine's proverbial plea for time is inverted by way of example!).

As all true gurus are good, so is every mantra powerful. Choose your own if you lack a guru, but once chosen do not change or forsake it, it is your way home. Strength and serenity look out from the faces in the photographic illustrations to this book.

Life itself prepares some people for the peak experience of cosmic consciousness, perhaps—given time—prepares all. The yogi and the magician in their different ways co-operate consciously with life to expedite the process, the one combining perserverance with a certain spontaneity, the other exercising a will to prevail which strikes the onlooker as being a good deal more formidable. The yogi's devotions are solitary; by contrast

the magician's words of power invoke the aid of an invisible hierarchy, and his rituals are the more effective for the participation of other students (and the most proficient of occultists is ever a student). In both systems do many fail.

Writing from his experience of the techniques of the Hermetic Society of the Golden Dawn, Dr. Regardie touches on the long history of ceremonial magic, discusses the principles and performance of ritual with examples, and gives practical instruction in the equipment of a temple and its arrangement. The reader is referred to various other works for a fuller explanation of recondite allusions. The magniloquent invocations are scarcely to be called mantras, brief and repetitive as those by definition must be: the dynamism of these resounding syllables mysterious in meaning, of these evocative declarations in the high style of rhetoric, is of another order altogether, whilst the accompanying ceremonial is itself conducive to the mental exaltation required. The author claims the superiority of this dramatic method over that of Bhakti, refuting also the charge of lovelessness brought by Evelyn Underhill against the theurgists.

Certainly the cheerful approach to deity via mantra is casual in comparison with the awesome procedures of ceremonial magic. Yet these two books taken together leave one with the inescapable impression that there is a potent element in Bhakti yoga, less valued by the exponents of magic, that places the yogi much nearer to the mystics of Christendom and no further from the goal of all seekers. Where superiority resides, the Swami does not say.

ELIZABETH GAYTHORPE.

Symbols For Eternity. Mona Rolfe, Ph.D. (Neville Spearman, £4.95.)

It makes difficulties for author and reader alike when a book is not of an order capable of assessment in everyday values. Such books depend upon the inner response or resonance which they evoke in the reader, or which the reader is able to bring. Whether Mona Rolfe's teacher is indeed an Atlantean initiate, and to whatever degree she can reproduce something of his own level of consciousness, the prime matter is whether she (or he) is in touch at levels of deep spiritual import. It must be judged in that way, otherwise it can only seem nonsense. It claims to reproduce from the Akashic records a picture of the inner natures and spiritual tests of the apostles. A sympathetic reader is likely

to feel that anyhow these are the *sort* of spiritual burdens which sooner or later great souls are called upon to face. Likewise the chapters on symbols—the key, the vine, the lamp, the loaves and fishes, and a number of others—bear evocative appeals to the reader's inner understanding, as part of a universal spiritual language. This is quite apart from the particular chain of events from Atlantean times onward, they are said to illustrate.

This book will certainly repay its right readers.

PAUL BEARD.

Animals Are Equal. Rebecca Hall. (Wildwood House, £6.95.)

Is Man, that cypher and newcomer upon the planet Earth, trapping himself in his own unwarranted assumptions, effete convictions and the resultant restricted number of senses through which he conducts his activities? Rebecca Hall believes this to be the case. She is sure that he can raise himself to a freer, happier, more intelligent mode of life if he cultivates wider powers of observation. One of many ways available to him is to tune in to animals. She has collected a variety of anecdotes reporting the remarkable response of animals to *unrestricted* human friendship. Through empathy dormant psychic faculties may be awakened, such as telepathy, and the power to heal. These and other godsends can be reciprocal, of mutual benefit to the animal and the human entities.

That some of her stories are open to charges of mere coincidence (whatever that means), that they don't push the scientific angle, and are not outstandingly well-written, does not matter at all. The sum total of her work is a treat and an encouragement to unlock the doors of perception. Avoiding dogma and sentimentality, Rebecca Hall presents her case for the oneness of life. Those who enforce separateness produce fear, discord, suffering. The cultivation of love for all species creates courage, harmony, the healing of many sicknesses. Her plea is for the transmutation of negative energy, for experiencing the values of non-linear thinking, for casting off blindfolds and learning to look with the inner eye. Respect for and love of the animal kingdom can only expand human consciousness. Discard the theory that because animals are different from humans they are therefore inferior.

A cat named Little Purvey, the giver and recipient of great affection, undoubedly became telepathic. When out and about, heaven knew where, he would return within minutes when his owner silently, telepathically called him. Astonishingly, all his graceful life he emanated an uncat-like delectable fragrance

through the crown of his head! Countless and often unpredicable are the fruits of affinity. Well aware of this, Rebecca Hall provides examples and ideas to help humans to share her knowledge, thereby enriching the quality of life.

C. D'ALESSIO.

Proceedings and Abstracts of the IV International Conference on Psychotronic Research. São Paulo, 1979. 2 vols., 503 pp.

The International Association for Psychotronic Research (IAPR) is a unique body that enables both aligned and non-aligned researchers from east and west to meet and exchange ideas. *Psychotronics* is the word they have found mutually acceptable to describe mind-matter interactions.

Copies of these two volumes have been presented to the College library, and members will find much of interest here, whether their special field be physics, medicine, biology, or plain old-fashioned psychical research. No less than ninety-four papers are included, most of them in English, and while there is a certain amount of chaff, as there often is at large international gatherings, there is also much wheat. Subjects discussed include acupuncture, dowsing, Kirlian photography, bioengineering, brain functions and telepathy. To give an idea of the variety offered. here are Czech priest Frantisek Ferda and Barbara Ivanova (Moscow) on healing, Brazilian psychologists Julika Kiskos and Andrée Samuel on ESP in psychotherapy, Ghana's Dr. C. H. Ayisi on African cosmology and the paranormal, Dr. G. Caymaz of Turkey on the aura, and five Soviet papers on medical matters.

The contribution from Brazil, the host country, is strong and well varied, with the papers by Spiritist researchers likely to be of special interes to LIGHT readers.

G. L. PLAYFAIR.

Photographs of the Uknown. Robert Rickard and Richard Kelly. (New English Library, 1980. 144 pp., £7.95.)

In psychical research, one photograph can be worth a thousand words, and this astonishing collection of some 350 pictures, old and new, is worth several volumes of anecdotal evidence. Here they all are—flying saucers, monsters in Loch Ness and elsewhere, bleeding saints, firewalkers, bent spoons, psychic surgeons, levitating objects and people, and a good deal more.

Like the *Fortean Times,* of which Rickard is editor, this book is both highly entertaining and serious in aim, the aim being to remind us how many 'wild facts' in nature still await

explanation. Some of the photos, as the authors readily admit, are known or suspected to be fakes, and these make a useful comparison with what must be the real thing—most notably the extraordinary series in which London medium Gladys Hayter seems to be dematerialising as a bright light streams out of her chest.

The authors have avoided too much reliance on old favourites, such as Florence Cook and Eusapia Palladino (though both are well represented) and have tracked down a good deal of new material, much of it hitherto unpublished And though the book is very handsomely produced, it is reasonably priced, and a paperback edition is promised. No coffee table, or serious researcher's library, should be without it.

G. L. PLAYFAIR.

Planetary Harmonies. An Astrological Book of Meditation. **Joan Hodgson.** (White Eagle Publishing Trust. £5.50.)

"O Lord," sang the Psalmist, "when I consider thy heavens, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

The search for the answer persists to this day, since every seeker is obliged to hunt for it himself. Some of those who practise meditation hope to solve the perennial problem by turning from the objective to the subjective. In this context, from star-gazing to astrology. The stars, the constellations, the celestial rhythms, influence each other, the earth, and the human spirit. After gazing outwards at heavenly activities, man can gaze inwards, and choose appropriate astrological symbols on which to focus his mind's eye. Joan Hodgson presents aspects of astrology as a meditational discipline. To some, this will constitute a new approach. Certainly it can appeal to both prospective and confirmed meditators. It offers more scope than an arbitrary symbol or mantram. The book is written conscientiously and refreshingly. It is well-balanced, and provides against misguided practices, and unwanted psychical intrusions.

"Thinking," she writes, "is not true meditation. Meditation can only begin when the mind has been stilled, the body relaxed, and the whole being focused on a symbol." True meditators know this already. But some may not yet realise sufficiently the advantages inherent in choosing the *right personalised* symbol. Joan Hodgson makes this possible. She shows each individual how to relate to natural laws and planetary signs and harmonies that are specifically his own.

Her book is full of light. It deserves to be enjoyed, and its teaching diligently applied.

C. D'ALESSIO.

The Sacred Mirror. Margery Eyre. (Colin Smythe, £3.95.)

Readers of Margery Eyre's earlier spiritual diaries* will welcome this further volume which covers a period of particular difficulty, and of change, in the latter part of her life. There is a noticeable deepening of content. Margery Eyre is totally committed to serving God, and if material difficulties ease at times, her efforts are then intensified in tackling what she feels to be personal inadequacies. This record indicates an exceptional range of awareness: affinity with advanced spiritual beings on the one hand, and a painful sense of her own failings and areas of darkness. She still often feels isolated and afraid. The theme is summed up in a sentence from one of the entries: "All the effort and strain of earth incarnation is for the transmutation of unconscious unity with God into conscious oneness". The entries record some of the difficulties, apparent failures, and successes, of trying to live this awareness, and the advice received on how to achieve its greater fulfilment, very often through a shift in emphasis. The spiritual insights are expressed in the Christian symbology natural to the writer, but the truth is universal.

* *The Teachings of Melchior. The Revealing Light. The Seeker and the Finding. The Way of Companionship.*

BRENDA MARSHALL.

The Life Beyond Death. Revd. Charles Fryer. The College of Psychic Studies, £1. (£1.15 post paid.)

The value of any scripts must, of course, rest on their content but other particular factors may justifiably add to their interest. These have such claims. They are through the hand of an Anglican priest; and the presumed communicator, his father, throughout his earth life was a devout member of a sect opposed on principle to psychic exploration. Added to this, the scripts have as their aim a transparently sincere desire to tell the truth about the nature of life in the third sphere as meticulously accurately as the communicator can, though he constantly points out that the words do not adequately convey concepts which are partly beyond our present understanding. Nevertheless, a convincing picture emerges of a life of developing consciousness and awareness, in which personal relationships—by no means necessarily those formed during earth life—still play a part. He describes (among much else) the experiences of a man who, terminally ill, took his own life; the form that rest takes; the communing of groups who come together for mutual meditation; the growing sense of purpose: "Work is the necessary condition of spiritual existence". Life in the fifth sphere is touched on, the communicator making it clear that for this he is dependent

upon information relayed through a higher being, consciousness there being so further developed that it is different in kind. But these scripts are among the most interesting in this unusual and worthwhile collection.

BRENDA MARSHALL.

Books Received

Meditation. A Basic Course in Three Parts. Devised and published by The Atlanteans (£3.25; £3.70 post paid from 42 St. George's Street Cheltenham.)

The number of books available presenting different aspects of the theory and practice of meditation may easily confuse the beginner and prove a hindrance rather than an incentive to make a start with the practice. This book does not fall into that category. On the contrary, it sets out in Part I a programme of simple, short exercises in orderly progression which, if carried out regularly, could not fail to bring success on the level at which they are aimed. The emphasis and instruction on closing the aura will be useful to many who, sometimes unawares, go about in a state of uncontrolled openness.

Building on this foundation, Courses II and III take the student much deeper into meditative and breathing practices. The point is made throughout that, at least for the busy Westerner, short regular sessions are best. Highly recommended for those who intend to do, rather than read about.

B. M.

Voices In My Ear. The Autobiography of a Medium. Doris Stokes and Linda Dearsley. (Futura Publications, £1.)

Doris Stokes' readers, whether or not they seek evidence of survival after death, may find reassurance and perhaps laughter in the pages of her busy life story. She chats away in a warm-hearted, unpretentious manner. There are many convincing anecdotes to illustrate her clairaudient and clairvoyant talents.

C. D'A.

The Multiple Planes of the Cosmos and Life. Prof. Solon Wang. (The Society for Psychic Studies, Taiwan, 29.95 dollars.)

In this tome of 900 pages Professor Wang studies the doctrines of the great world religions and of survival and reincarnation. His real material needs to be treated esoterically; his treatment is exoteric and rational. This is a very widely-based book with many quotations from eastern and western sources.

P. B.

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These scripts from a naturalist and poet after his death give a vivid picture of the extension of consciousness which he rapidly reached and also record his intimate sharing of this with a friend on earth.

Paper 10 THE LIFE BEYOND DEATH. £1.00 (19p).
Part 1 A General Guide.
Part 2 Life in the Fifth Sphere.
Through the hand of the Revd. Charles Fryer

Paper 3 CHANGING CONSCIOUSNESS
Ronald Fraser (out of print).

GATEWAY **By Roger Whitby**

(£1.75, post paid £1.92, from C.P.S.)

This book tells of part of Roger Whitby's journey after death. His answers, communicated telepathically through his mother, to a series of questions asked by his father and Paul Beard, cover, among other topics: talking by telepathy; learning and growing; reincarnation; experiences during sleep; the total self. *"It is a book to have on one's shelf, a book to use as a basis for further thought." Philip Hills.*

The College of Psychic Studies is always ready to offer its specialised help in various fields and in bereavement. Please help to make its work more widely known by passing on this copy of LIGHT to someone who might be interested. The services of the College, a non-profit-making educational charity, are available to members and non-members alike, but to maintain our standards we need to gain new members. In these days of inflation donations and legacies play an increasing part in supporting our work and are greatly appreciated, however small.

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