

THE PROFIT AND LOSS OF DYING

(By CLYDE IRION)

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PREFACE

IMMORTALITY

Throughout the ages, man has been both awed and frightened by the prospect of his end of life on earth. Most societies have encouraged man to believe in a life of some kind following death; but in as much as he had to die to find out about it, he has been confused, as well as frightened.

It is very probable that the fear would have been greatly lessened during all the ages if a certain word had not unfortunately been chosen to describe man's leaving his physical body. That ill-chosen word, death, has been a stumbling block to all. It is a word that has come to be horrifying and fraught with sorrow, sadness and emotional outbursts because of the implication of the word itself-namely, that it marks the "end" of life, the absolute terminus of living. The lack of understanding, the weeping and mourning on the part of those who are left, has for many centuries made this occasion, in actual fact, a pagan experience.

One of the definitions the dictionary gives of the word "death" is "cessation of existence." You have heard it said many times that nothing is impossible. This is not wholly true. It is utterly impossible for you to conceive of your own non-existence. There are those who feel that this inability is all that is necessary to establish a basis for an acceptance of the philosophy of immortality.

The reasoning is that anything that is possible for the human mind to conceive of, is possible of attainment. Whatever, if anything, is impossible to conceive of (ipso facto) doesn't exist. Therefore, since it is impossible to conceive of one's non-existence, then such a state does not exist. It follows that a continuing existence, i.e., immortality, must of necessity exist. It has been very aptly stated that to be alive is to be immortal.

Any discussion of the reasonableness of the concept of immortality should include the fact that all the historical cultures of the world have included a belief in some form of personal survival of death. Our Western civilization embraced this belief until nineteenth-century materialism induced people to try to discard any notions about there

being anything following death. This only augmented man's uncertainty and confusion and, in many cases, fear of the event. Yet along with the uncertainty and the fears, one of man's deepest longings has been for his own immortality.

The great prevalence of "Juniors" bearing their fathers' names; the many foundations and similar establishments bearing the founders' names; and various other efforts on the part of individuals to perpetuate their names-all are evidences of a deep seated longing for immortality. Is it not reasonable to say that one cannot long for something that doesn't even exist, has never existed, and will never exist? How else than through the doorway of reality and truth can such a concept form the basis for any longing?

To say that something simply does not "make sense" is far indeed from "scientific." Yet there are many individuals who are spiritually secure and content in having their acceptance of the philosophy of immortality based on the reasoning that nothing else "makes sense" to them. It simply does not appear to be reasonable to suppose that the short span of life allotted to one's earth existence in a vast sea of beginning-less and endless time constitutes all there is to one's existence. Scientific formulas have their necessary place, but so does reasonableness which can and must go beyond them.

Quite possibly you have read of an emotional intellectual state called cosmic consciousness, which has been attained by a few individuals scattered through the pages of history. St. Paul the apostle certainly attained it; Socrates is believed to have been fortunate enough to have experienced it; the thirteenth century Italian poet Dante, Sir Francis Bacon, Walt Whitman-these are outstanding examples of many who have quite obviously attained this rare spiritual consciousness.

And what is cosmic consciousness? It is a state of Being, completely beyond the power of words to describe. Words and verbal language are inventions designed for communicating in terms of our three-dimensional world. Cosmic consciousness is a state far, far beyond human, three-dimensional consciousness.

You can easily imagine, can you not, that an individual cell in, let's say, a flower, has its own rudimentary form of consciousness? How else would it have developed and grown into the thing of beauty which it is? Far above this single cell in consciousness are the lower invertebrates, or even the vertebrate genus of animals. Now you will

find it somewhat difficult to imagine and identify with the consciousness of a chicken, for example. You can easily look down upon the chicken, but try to project in the opposite direction. Try to conceive of a consciousness as far above your own as yours is above that of a chicken. This is a crude analogy of what would be a small measure of cosmic consciousness.

Cosmic consciousness is a realization of unity and affinity with the universe, with all that exists. No longer is there a sense of separateness; no longer is there a feeling that the universe and life are antagonistic to one's welfare. Those who have experienced cosmic consciousness do not live in it continuously. It settles over them like a dove of peace for periods of time ranging from the briefest moment to, conceivably, a few hours. During this time there exists a state or a quality which is completely nonverbal; it is beyond the farthest potential of descriptive words. Those who have experienced it have tried valiantly but vainly to describe it.

What is the connection between this cosmic consciousness and immortality? One of its aspects is a release from time. Normally we are trapped by the present moment of time, and we feel that there is no way to free ourselves from this entrapment. Encased as if in a bubble, we are carried by the present moment along the now-quiet, now-turbulent stream of life at a rate of speed decreed by time, over which we tell ourselves we have no control.

Among other results, cosmic consciousness releases the recipient from this imprisonment within the bubble of the present moment. He is enabled or allowed to experience a condition of timelessness, which, again, is utterly non-verbal and beyond description. One of the results of this release from time, with its concomitant shackles, touches immortality. Under normal conditions, operating in our present consciousness, we tell ourselves that we believe in immortality, and that our faith in it precludes any possibility of our discarding our conviction of it.

But the recipient of cosmic consciousness no longer simply believes in immortality; he experiences it. He experiences it not as something he will attain at some distant time in the future, but as something he is living now. He experiences it with a knowing which is beyond words and beyond description. He experiences it in a wholly different order from that of simply firm belief and conviction, and this

knowing cannot be transmitted. Those who have experienced cosmic consciousness no longer have any fear of what we call death; they realize that it is only a doorway into a different state of being.

Another very important source of firm belief and conviction that the personality survives the disposal of the physical body is communication between the two worlds. Communication through the veil that separates "life" from so-called "death" has been known and recorded since time immemorial.

Notwithstanding the fact that the twentieth century is the century of wars and rumors of wars and world upheaval, it is also the century of the re-discovery of spiritual truth far surpassing that in any intervening century since at least the beginning of the Christian era. Part of this renaissance has to do with increased communication between the two worlds.

It cannot, of course, be said that an acceptance of inter-plane communication is a cause of a belief in immortality, because one presupposes the other. But granted a certain predisposition toward a belief in immortality, that belief is greatly strengthened by selective study of communication between the two sides of the veil. Just as one presupposes the other, each also augments the other.

There are various types of inter-plane relationships, some of which are highly constructive, and some of which have their basis only in a lust for vicarious satisfaction or selfish motives. There are some whose spiritual eyes are open and who can see those from the other side. Thus, people have "seen ghosts" throughout the ages. Likewise, there are those whose spiritual ears are open and who can hear those from the other side and benefit from the messages given. Related to this, there are those who lend their vocal equipment to spiritually approved personalities from the other side, who can then speak through the individual still in the physical body on this side. This form of communication is the basis of the major source material for this book.

THE MORE ADVANCED GROUP OF SPIRITUAL TEACHERS

If the idea seems plausible to you that the human personality survives the milestone called death, and remains the same individual (though in a state far beyond the present limits of the vision of most of us), then the next premise should be equally acceptable.

Just as there are those here in a physical life who strive to be of service to mankind, so there are those who have passed through the veil of transition and no longer have physical bodies as we know them, who also aspire to the same ideal. Many individuals from this "other side" have dedicated themselves to serving the spiritual welfare of those still on this side.

Many of these interests and activities are coordinated into organized work for greater effectiveness.

Such an organization is the vast network of spiritual Teachers from that other side known as being a more advanced group. Those who comprise this group have gone through the veil of transition and have dedicated themselves to service in spreading the Light of Christ. Theirs is a labor of love. Some of them have not had physical bodies on this plane for centuries. Others, like Stainton Moses, Ernest Holmes, Florence Shinn, and Dr. James H. Hyslop were on the earth very recently.

The work of this group is under the general direction of more advanced Teachers, a great and noble spirit who was chosen by Moses and Elijah for the particular work of assisting in the spiritualization of the earth plane. These two talked with the Master on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they are still closely associated with Jesus in the Great Work.

The more advanced Teachers' work comprises of seven spheres with seven great leaders, and each of these seven leaders has seven who work under him. Thus the more advanced Teachers have command of forty-nine great souls, spiritual leaders, who are operating around, on and through the earth plane. Each of these in turn has a great company of workers, whose work covers the whole earth, who live and move and have their being on both sides of the veil of transition.

The seven divisions comprising the more advanced Teachers' work are concerned with seven phases or aspects of earth plane living.

One group or division concerns itself with the fostering and spreading of Christ-like love, the love of God, the love of man, compassion, pity and friendship. Another group consists of those whose work is that of inspiring spiritual Teachers. Still another group concerns itself with the arts, assisting those who create in fields of music, painting, sculpture, languages, poetry and literature.

Seven aspects, altogether, of constructive earth interests and activities are represented by corresponding divisions within the group of spiritual Teachers. The division or group with which we are primarily concerned in this book is made up of those who dedicate themselves to the furtherance of wisdom, perception, intuition, consideration of cause and effect, reason, and the laws of Life. It is the group which deals with education.

This group is under the immediate direction of a spiritual Teacher known as Aramias, who has not lived in a physical body for so long that, like many of the other Teachers, he is no longer identified by his earth name. It is from this group that there have come the information and teachings forming the basis of this book.

You might very logically ask the question, "Since these Teachers are no longer in physical bodies, how have their teachings and their information been obtained?" To answer this question we must go back many years to a time when a young woman entered into an association with Dr. Titus Bull, President and Director of Research of the James H. Hyslop Foundation in New York, which concerned itself with scientific investigation of certain aspects of psycho-spiritual phenomena. Under the most meticulous tutelage of Dr. Bull, this young woman, now Mrs. Grace Ulrich Gause, was trained as an advanced spiritual Teachers group channel. Her rigorous training resulted in an ability to allow those whom we have called spiritually approved personalities to use her vocal mechanism for the purpose of channelling spiritual teachings and truths from this more advanced group of spiritual Teachers to the earth plane of existence.

During more than ten years of association with Dr. Bull, this young woman's work with this more advanced group of spiritual Teachers blossomed and reached full flower. For the past forty years Mrs. Gause has been a dedicated spiritual teacher and channel for the Group. The major portion of her last thirty years has been spent in the San Francisco Bay Area, where her work has involved both private

counselling and group teaching, in which she has constantly made use of her highly developed channelship.

The Applied Universal Metaphysics Foundation is an outgrowth of her work in-group teaching. During weekly meetings of this AUM Foundation one of the more advanced group Teachers speaks through Mrs. Gause, bringing teachings of the Laws of Life, the Laws of Being, conditions on the other side of the veil of transition, and such other spiritual teachings as are appropriate to, and needed by, the group from week to week. The major contents of this book are taken from weekly tapes recorded over the past eight years.

Aramias, the spiritual personality who is the leader of the group with which the AUM Foundation works, in speaking of more advanced spiritual Teachers and other great Beings, to whom he is responsible, has said, "The brilliance of their personalities far outshines the sun. They have reached Illumination, and it is a privilege to stand in their presence when we are sufficiently developed to do so."

We, too-you and I-can know that the time will come when we will also stand in their presence.

Chapter I

THE ARRIVAL

It was closing time at the bar where Joe was a bartender. Somehow it had been an especially tough night and Joe was even more short-tempered than usual, cursing the inclement weather, his waiter who had quit, and his lot in general, as he quickly surveyed the scene before locking the door and walking out into the street. Although it was far past midnight the traffic was still very heavy. And Joe was in no mood to be tolerant of the cars and their drivers as they passed him, seeming not to care whether they hit him or not as he crossed at several intersections.

One driver especially Joe would have liked to tear limb from limb with his bare hands. And with his extremely powerful shoulders, arms and hands, he could have done it with little waste of time. He seemed almost blind with rage as he paused to hurl further invectives in the

direction of the car that was already losing its identity in the heavy traffic.

As Joe quickly resumed his steps toward the curb, he suddenly became aware of a car bearing down on him much too speedily. He also heard the screeching of brakes. Like a crouching panther

Joe sprang toward the curb. Time itself stood still; everything stopped-everything, that is, except that forebodingly awesome screeching of brakes. That hideous sound seemed to go on and on.

But Joe was almost as nimble and agile as he was powerful, and he made it clear of the onrushing car . . . he thought. Nevertheless, a crowd of horrified onlookers gathered around a now limp and lifeless form. Joe was what the world calls dead.

He heard some comments to that effect but brushed them aside. He clearly remembered the onrushing car; but inasmuch as he was sure he had gotten out of the way in time, the incident somehow seemed far away and was now relatively unimportant, in spite of his tremendous anger at the time.

Joe went on home but was totally unprepared for what he encountered there. With a mixture of amazement and consternation he discovered that for some wholly illogical reason, his family either could not or would not recognize him. And he seemingly could not make himself heard.

As if that were not trouble enough, somebody got in touch with his family and succeeded in convincing them that he was dead. Their grief, together with his frustration at not being able to make them recognize him and convince them that he was alive, was almost more than Joe could bear. The whole world, and everybody in it, he thought, had suddenly gone completely mad.

Furthermore, Joe was bitter. He was a man who was hard and cold, cruel and ruthless in his attitude toward people and toward life. He was obscene and sordidly uncouth, and his years as a bartender had hardened him beyond any mortal hope of decency and respectability.

And now the whole worthless world, Joe thought, had suddenly gotten completely deranged and unhinged. Why in the name of God, if there is such a thing (which he doubted), had everybody, including his

own family, apparently refused to hear what he tried to tell them, or even to recognize his presence?

Joe's efforts to get through to his family and convince them that he was not dead remained futile. Filled with a mixture of anger and frustration, he started wandering around more or less aimlessly. He visited his old haunts, determined to find someone who would listen to him, whom he could convince that the rumour of his alleged death was totally without foundation. How could he be talking to them, or trying to talk to them, if he were dead?

Joe's efforts and frustration both mounted. He did, however, begin to meet someone here and there who would talk to him; but oddly enough each of these persons was having the same trouble Joe was having. No one else would talk to them either. Out of a number of people he met in this way, he picked out two or three of his own kind and they wandered around, aimlessly.

Then one of his new companions deserted him. At least it seemed that way to Joe. Together they were berating their fate and the sorry, sordid affair they called life.

"You know," the companion said, "after all the things that have been happening to me lately, I think I must be sort of mixed up, maybe about a lot of things."

"Maybe you're mixed up," Joe retorted, "but I'm not! This whole crazy, miserable world we're in is mixed up plenty, but not me."

"Well, anyway," answered the companion, "I think I'm about ready to say that I wish there was somebody I could talk to who could get me straightened out."

Joe glanced away for a moment. At that very instant, almost from out of nowhere a stranger appeared and started talking to his companion. Where he had come from Joe could not be at all sure, but there he was, and Joe's friend was listening to something the stranger was saying. Joe's first reaction to the newcomer was one of contempt and dislike. After all, Joe didn't like much of anybody, and he didn't care particularly who knew it.

But then after a few moments, oddly enough, Joe's feelings toward the stranger began to change slightly. He didn't know what it was, but there was something altogether indescribable about the manner

of the stranger. Joe wouldn't admit to himself that he liked him, but he felt that he could tolerate him a little easier than he could most people.

After awhile Joe gathered that the stranger invited his companion to accompany him. Joe had no idea where they were going, but his companion indicated that, yes, he thought he would like to go. And that was the last Joe saw of him.

This wandering and frustrated bartender continued to drift from place to place, making new acquaintances. But it was always the same: only those would talk to him who, like he, had heard rumors of their own deaths. He continued to spend quite a bit of his time trying to convince his family that the story about his death was obviously false. But they ignored him as if he didn't exist.

The days slipped into weeks and the weeks into months, although Joe was not aware of this. To him, time was not something that was going somewhere, like a wheel rolling along, making one turn for each day or week or month. He was aware that it existed; but his concern or consciousness did not include any idea of time standing still or going backward or speeding rapidly forward. It meant nothing to him, although he could not have explained why.

In terms of our calendar concept of time, however, about four months after Joe thought he had cleared the path of the speeding car a new door opened to him. He was extremely suspicious of that door at first, as would be anyone with Joe's misanthropic background.

After an especially gruelling session of trying unsuccessfully to get some of his former cronies to extend to him some semblance of recognition, he became, very uncharacteristically, somewhat pensive. In this new mood a most remarkable thing happened to him. He was momentarily conscious of a fleeting wish for help, a desire for something or someone who could help him find an answer to his dilemma.

Suddenly his pensiveness was interrupted by someone walking slowly toward him.

"I have come in response to your desire for help," the stranger said quietly.

Joe's first reaction was to give this intruder a hard punch with his fist to get him out of the way. He had always prided himself on the fact

that he needed no help from anyone. His own two fists were all he had ever required. But this reaction was followed instantly by a new wave of frustration at not being able to talk to, and being totally ignored by those people he most wanted to communicate with. Besides, Joe noted with strangely mixed feelings, something about this man would have prevented him from using his fists any way.

"How can I help you?" the stranger asked. "If it's any business of yours," Joe retorted, recovering his usual insolence, "I wanna be able to talk to people, and have them talk to me!"

"Perhaps that can be arranged," the stranger replied, still quietly, unmoved by Joe's antagonistic attitude.

"What d'ya mean, arranged? Since when do I have to arrange to talk to people? I've been quite a talker all my life, and nobody hadda arrange for me to do any talkin'. Now this crazy thing has happened, and I keep on tryin' to talk to people, but nobody will talk to me - except a few guys here and there that are havin' the same trouble that I am."

"And would you like to talk to some people who are not, as you say, having the same trouble you are having?"

"Well, cripes, what do you think? I wouldn't be wastin' my time talkin' to you if I didn't, would I?" "If I arrange for you to talk to some people I know, perhaps they can help you find your answer," volunteered the stranger. "I don't need any help!" Joe snapped. "Except to find out what's goin' on around here. Can you tell me that?"

"Come with me."

The quiet, reassuring and soothing calmness of this man was wholly foreign to one of Joe's make-up. Ordinarily Joe would have brushed aside such a person with a contemptuous gesture and a few insolent words. But he was conscious of two motivating forces within him, almost as if he were two persons instead of the one he had always known himself to be, as if another part of himself - a strangely unfamiliar part - was saying, commandingly but calmly, "You are to go with this man. It is what you have been preparing for. Go, and do as he bids you."

Amazingly, Joe trusted this unfamiliar voice. Almost unquestioningly he turned and followed the stranger who spoke with the calm reassurance Joe instinctively knew he needed.

Chapter II

CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION

At this point Joe still was not aware that he was "dead." His consciousness therefore embraced only the three-dimensional earth plane. This new environment was totally unfamiliar territory and he had no idea why he was in a strange place instead of at home. And, worst of all, nobody could tell him why.

Joe had no spiritual background for understanding transition and therefore no means of releasing himself from the earth plane. And so he very much needed an actual contact with people in physical bodies - not just another futile attempt to make himself seen and heard.

Aramias, who had approached Joe when the first sign of wanting help was expressed, was in the process of making this contact possible. The experience would help to relieve the months of mounting frustration resulting from Joe's not being able to communicate with most people. Many times, too, as Aramias and others of the Teachers had found out, persons on the earth plane could perform a service the Teachers themselves could not perform on the other side. One like Joe who could not complete his transition, because of his ignorance of his condition and because of his ties to the earth, could be persuaded by those in physical bodies that he was no longer in a physical body-that he had passed over from the earth plane.

"I will now take you to some people who will talk to you when you talk to them," Aramias promised Joe. "But you must do just as I say. You must talk only when I tell you to talk."

It was February 28, 1958. The members of the Applied Universal Metaphysics Foundation were assembled for their weekly meeting in Burlingame, California. The Channel, Mrs. Grace Ulrich Gause, sat quietly and prepared herself for Channelship for the evening, according to the method taught her by Dr. Bull.

When Aramias approached her, she assured herself that it was indeed Aramias and not an impostor seeking to use her vocal chords.

She realized there was a stranger with Aramias, but this gave her no concern. She allowed Aramias to use her vocal mechanism.

"We have someone here for whom you can perform a service," Aramias began, speaking with calm assurance. "Every precaution has been taken to insure that this Channel has adequate protection. Be assured that everything is under our complete control."

With this brief announcement, Aramias withdrew. After a few moments, from this same vocal mechanism that had been used by Aramias moments earlier, there came words having a distinctly uncouth quality.

"Well, for cripes sake, what am I supposed to be doin' here?" Joe demanded insultingly. "What is this, the ladies aid society or somethin'?"

"No, it's not the ladies aid society," assured Leonard A. Worthington, the moderator for the group, who did most of the talking to Joe, "but we will be glad to explain to you what it is."

"Who said I was interested in a bunch of dudes like this gang? I didn't ask to be brought to this dump!"

"Maybe you didn't, but if you will . . ." Leonard ventured, trying to find a starting point from which he could be of help to Joe.

"I wanna tell you somethin'," Joe interrupted, slightly less contemptuously, more interested now in his own problem and frustration than in the nature of the group to whom he had been brought. "I never get to talk. Oh, I talk a lot but people don't listen to me. Now you're listenin' to me, right?"

"Yes, we are," Leonard assured him.

"I don't know why," Joe continued quickly, obviously anxious to get to the point of his continued frustration. "Other people don't listen to me, and I try so hard! But they don't pay attention to me! They say. . ." Here, in spite of Joe's innate contemptuousness, there was a note of contriteness and pleading for understanding. "My God! They say I'm dead! And I'm not dead! You know I'm not dead, because I'm talkin' to you!" He had become extremely impassioned and agitated. "And yet I can't make other people listen to me. Somebody tell me why, because I don't know why. Can you tell me why?"

At this point Joe was confronted with another surprise, so great that it temporarily distracted his attention from his immediate problem of not being able to get people to talk to him.

"What's goin' on around here?" he demanded. "I got different clothes now than when I left to go with that guy. I don't get it, but all of a sudden I got a suit on like I use to have-like you got!"

Leonard, not exactly prepared for this contingency, was thinking quickly of an answer that Joe might accept. "You see," he began slowly, "you originally came onto the earth plane for a particular purpose."

"How do you think you know so blasted much about me? I never saw you before in my life."

"You wore your regular clothes until you had accomplished your reason for being on the earth plane," Leonard continued cautiously. "Then you dispensed with your physical body, changed your type of clothing, and went over to what we call the other side."

"Over where? I don't go anywhere! I'm here! Don't you hear me? Nobody seems to hear me when I talk any more."

"Yes, I heard," answered Leonard. "You are not actually with us. But because you have temporarily returned to the earth, you automatically took on the same clothing you wore before you left the earth. It is appropriate to the earth plane but not to the plane where you have just come from. But we here on the earth are restricted, and we have lower vibrating bodies. we cannot move as you do, so we wear....."

"Come on, brother!" Joe interrupted. "Don't tell me you don't move around on the earth, because I moved all over the place!"

Joe's tones throughout this exchange of comments revealed callousness, insolence and contemptuousness in the extreme. A repulsive cynicism was predominantly evident. Had he been present in his physical body, it is more than likely that many persons would have involuntarily cringed away from him.

"But all I do now is talk to myself," Joe went on. "Nobody pays attention to me. They did when I was there. How come?"

"Doesn't anybody talk to you where you are now?" asked Leonard.

"Oh, us guys got a crowd. We talk, but we don't get nowhere."

"Do you ever talk for the purpose of trying to help one another?"

"What's that?" Joe asked, very suspiciously.

"To help someone improve in some way," Leonard answered, "to have more happiness, to aid what you call mankind. Or are the people looking out only for themselves?"

"Well, you sound like a preacher," snarled Joe disgustedly, as his intonation of the word "preacher" reeked with insolence.

"No, I'm a lawyer." "Is that what you are?" drawled Joe, his tone revealing an utterly contemptuous disdain for all individuals comprising the legal profession. "Well, if you are lawyer and you know so much, tell me how we are gonna help people when they won't listen to us? We all talk to each other and to everybody, and nobody else ever listens. No, don't tell me I'm dead, because I know I'm alive."

"Do you have any purpose in life where you are now?" asked Leonard.

"No. Never had any purpose anyhow," Joe answered, more abjectly than insolently.

"Do you believe there is a God or a power that created you?"

Joe said nothing for a moment; then there was a long sigh and another moment of silence. "I suppose," he answered, resignedly and dejectedly.

Asked why he thought he had been created in the first place, he again pondered a moment before answering, "I've often wondered. I don't know. Don't see any reason for anything."

"Are you interested in finding out?"

"Sure!" Joe responded quickly. "I wouldn't be wastin' my time talkin' to you if I wasn't!"

As the conversation progressed, Leonard gradually broke down some portion of the belligerent attitude that Joe had manifested earlier. Joe finally admitted that he was far from satisfied and happy, just wandering around doing nothing. In fact, he readily admitted that he and the companions he had accumulated were, as he said, "sick of the whole job." He further indicated that his purpose in originally asking for help

was to try to find someone he could talk to who could help him "get out of the mess" he was in.

Leonard suggested that Joe call on the people who had brought him to this place. Joe was hesitant at first, his attitude indicating that he was not sure he wanted to trust them. But with further effort Leonard was able to pierce through an additional portion of Joe's armour of arrogance and cynicism. And it was obvious that when that cynicism was broken down, Joe was sincerely desirous of getting help.

"When you leave us," Leonard admonished after the "softening up" process, "ask your guide, the one who brought you here tonight, to help you get out of the mess you are in. He will take you where you want to go, and he will talk to you as he has talked to us - because, you see, he has been teaching us too. You can put your complete confidence in him. It won't hurt you. You will never regret it. Then in a week, two weeks, or a month, maybe he will bring you back to us and maybe we can talk again."

"Say, you're slick!" exclaimed Joe, for the first time showing some real interest. "You read my mind. I was gonna ask you if I could come back and tell you whether or not this thing worked."

"What is your name?" asked Leonard.

There was a moment of obviously distrusting hesitation. Then, extremely warily, "My name's Joe. What's yours?"

"You like the name Joe?"

"It's as good as any. You're not gonna find out anything different."

"That's all right," Leonard answered calmly, unmoved by Joe's lack of confidence in him.

But by this time it was obvious that Joe's morale had been improved. "You know," he ventured, hopefully, but with a remaining trace of wariness, "you may be on the level about all this."

"We are on the level," replied Leonard with an assurance that seemed to strike a responsive note with Joe.

"Okay, thanks, pal," responded Joe, his tone indicating for the first time an incipient friendliness. "And I'm gona try this."

"We know you like people," Leonard went on, "and because we love you. . ."

"Whaddya mean, you love me?" interrupted Joe. "Nobody loves me!" Then after a pause, he continued, "Is this whole thing really on the level? Let one of these other people. . ." He paused, moving Mrs. Gause's head to look around the group. "Is this on the level, you with the red dress?"

Joe was assured that everything was indeed on the level, after which Leonard challenged, "And you love people a great deal. You are pretty tough, but that's mostly just on the outside. You have a soft spot in your heart as big as my head, and you know it."

"Let's not go into that sob stuff, huh?" Joe countered quickly, as if in an attempt to cover up.

"We've got a deal, though," Leonard reminded him.

"Hey, you ask that guide if I can come back," Joe pleaded. "Do you know what I was gonna say? I was gonna say if I can't come back, I won't leave. But he is motioning for me, so I guess I better go."

"We'll look for you," Leonard assured him. "You talk with your guide, and we know it will work. And we love you and your whole bunch over there."

"That kinda hits below the belt, but we'll take it. Thanks, pal."

Chapter III

TRANSITION

What actually happened to Joe at the time he was hit by the car? His earthly life ended, but he was not aware of that. Why didn't he realize that the accident had been fatal? Why didn't he understand that he had no physical body?

If just prior to his accident Joe had for some reason given thought to his own death, because of his orthodox religious background he would have assumed that there would have been no possibility of his going to hell. Well, he did not go to hell. He didn't go to heaven, either,

after the car hit him. He went home, just where he had started to go when he left the bar. He was an uncouth, bitter, quick-tempered bartender named Joe as the car bore down on him. He was the same Joe as he left the scene of the accident. Quick changes occurred in his body, as he passed from one state of being into another as he made his transition - but he was not at the time aware of them.

What changes? And why was he not aware of them?

At the time the speeding car struck him, he was able-bodied, strong, and completely healthy. Anything having to do with the ending of his earthly life was far from his consciousness. One of the characteristics of transition is that you pass through that doorway and arrive "on the other side" with the same consciousness you had at the moment of starting through the doorway. As you read further, you will understand this better; for here you will meet those who passed through the doorway and knew what had happened, as well as those who passed through and did not know it-like Joe.

So Joe took on another body - a finer-textured body - instantly, which he recognized as his own, inasmuch as it was a duplicate of his physical body he had just left. Since it was of a finer texture, however, it caused Joe no end of difficulty when he continued on his way home. For no one seemed to recognize him when he arrived. They acted as if he weren't there and, indeed, to them he was not. They were totally unable to see the new, finer body that was Joe.

Most people cannot see the more advanced Teachers who come from the other side and talk with the AUM group; but the ability to see what is beyond the normal five senses has been more highly developed in some, to whom the Teachers are visible. Joe's family did not have this ability, and no matter what Joe said or did, they were unable to have any knowledge of or make any recognition of his presence. It was this frustration, due to his inability to make contact with his family and friends, that drove him finally to stop hanging around his home and spend his time with those on the other side who were having the same difficulty with earth people that he was having.

But Joe's consciousness contained no thought of his own death. This is because people do not experience passing over as being a process of any kind. They simply find themselves on the other side. Some are aware of what has taken place, depending upon the circumstances surrounding their going over and their preparation for it.

Others are not at all aware of it, just as in many instances upon awakening in the morning they are not aware of the several hours of time that have elapsed since they went to sleep. Oddly enough, this is true in many instances where a person passes on with dramatic suddenness, as Joe did.

Though you've gone through the doorway, the going is not necessarily instilled into the consciousness. One moment you are in your physical body. Then during a continuation of the same moment you are on the other side, in your other body, but with no break in your continuing consciousness. Despite the dramatic suddenness of accidental transitions of all kinds, such as Joe's, a mantle of forgetfulness, by one of nature's perfect laws, is mercifully allowed to fall around the incident itself. Thus Joe was healthy and strong and cynical and bellicose on his way home from the bar when the car bore down upon him. He was still the same Joe on his way home a few moments later.

But there is no one circumstance, no one rule of thumb, that is universally applicable to all transitions. Each case is an individual variant, governed by one's consciousness and his preparation for this event. Thus there are those who make their transition with the same suddenness as Joe and, like him, are able to walk away from it but, unlike him, are fully aware of what is happening. Members of the AUM group had an example of this type of awareness when a young soldier from Vietnam, speaking through Mrs. Gause on March 4, 1966, told of his own passing amid the shells of combat. This contact with the AUM group was the occasion of his first return to the earth plane, and he spoke nervously, as if he were not wholly sure of himself in what was for him at the moment a new role.

"It is a very strange sensation," he said, "when one stands alongside that which is lying on the ground and which people call 'you.' You see your body lying there, and you see the same thing happening all around you. But I had been trained by my father and mother, and I knew that the first thing for me to do was to get out of there, to leave as soon as I could. So I started on my way."

While the young soldier does not specifically state it, it seems safe to assume, from the way he spoke of it, that he was altogether aware of the fact that he had just "died." He saw the body he had

discarded, but he immediately turned and left, with no further concern about it.

Why was this young man fully cognizant of what was happening and so many others are not? The answer lies in his statement, "I had been trained by my father and mother." But, as he explained to the group, when he was ten years old both his parents went through the doorway of transition and he was put in a children's home.

During the next eight years, although life in this home was not in any way a traumatic experience, he was never really happy because of the immense contrast presented to his own early home life, a life that had been a deeply satisfying one in a happy home where love prevailed. During the years following the departure of his parents, he spent hours reflecting upon his early teachings which he remembered so fondly

Upon reaching the age of eighteen, he entered military service, was sent to take part in that unfortunate conflict in Vietnam, and in due time became a war casualty.

Most people of course do not die violent deaths, as did Joe and this soldier. Most individuals make their transitions as the result of some type of illness.

Nature, the Creative Principle, God, Infinite Love - call it whatever you like - has provided in the physical body a certain condition that holds the Soul, the individual, within it. It has a great magnetic pull that holds you in your body. This is good, for if it were not for that magnetic power of the physical body, many times that body would be cast aside before the one living within it has learned the lessons which he came to the earth plane this time to learn, or before he has given what he was supposed to give.

"When the time comes for one to leave the earth plane, the body begins to prepare to let the individual go. But with some very strong bodies and with some who are inordinately attached to material things of the world, the magnetic pull is much stronger, and the letting-go process is correspondingly difficult. Consequently a struggle ensues, and in the struggle the tension causes a distortion of the cells themselves, resulting in a lack of ease, or disease. But finally, after a certain time, relaxation takes place and the individual is free. Thus there are those who suffer greatly before they go.

"They may have chosen this suffering," one of the more advanced Teachers has pointed out, "and they choose not so much the particular condition of the physical body but the hours of suffering as a cleansing process, to relieve them and clear them from any dust and undesirable negation that may linger, so that they may have their clear, unhampered freedom when they leave their bodies. It is not necessary for anyone, but they have chosen it."

Of interest as an example of transition of one who suffered through the throes of disease and who also had had an extensive and solid spiritual background is the case of one whom we will call Gyril. "When the time came for me to make my transition," he reported to the AUM members, "having had spiritual training and a very long and serious illness, I was not loath to go. I had been struggling for a long time when suddenly I found myself free. This is a strange sensation. I recall looking at my body lying there in the hospital bed and thought how uninteresting it was, how emaciated; and I was filled with vigour and life by contrast. But I knew not where to go, so I just stood still and looked around.

"Presently, one of my former friends who had preceded me in transition approached. He spoke to me and greeted me. I greeted him, but I was still looking back at my family and wondering what kind of clothes they were going to put on my body and just what would come next. My friend had the intelligence to know what was in my mind and remained silent. It seemed that I was still there in the hospital room, but there had been changes in my consciousness, my body and my environment. After a few moments he asked, 'Are you ready?' It was not until then that I was inclined to go, and I answered, 'Yes, I am ready.' He said quietly, 'Then come, let us leave.' And I started on this fascinating journey."

You will note that, unlike Joe, Gyril was keenly aware of his leaving his physical body. This was due in part to the fact that his transition, or "graduation," unlike Joe's, had not been unexpected. But it was due mainly to his relatively long life of solid spiritual training, which had prepared him to understand the process and its significance.

The struggle, the disease, or other manifestation of the struggle, does not always occur. There are those who have fulfilled their mission, and they know they have fulfilled. The cells of these individuals' bodies, on their own level of consciousness, know they have fulfilled. And so

there is no struggle, no disease; the individual steps serenely out of his body and leaves it.

Nor is a period of unconsciousness prior to leaving the earth plane inherently necessary. It is not even ideally desirable. There are individuals who experience neither struggle and its resulting disease nor unconsciousness. And this is as it should be. They approach their transition, go through the doorway and find none of the usual obstacles in completing the process of transition. They go through it in the same full consciousness that they would go from one room into another, and it is within the power of everyone to accomplish this.

You have already learned that there are differences in the experiences of individuals immediately upon their release from the earth. There is such a wide range of differences, in fact, that a word of emphasis is appropriate.

There are billions upon countless billions of snowflakes, each unique to itself in terms of its individual pattern, yet basically the same. In like manner, on the other side of the veil called transition there are as many variations as there are individuals and degrees of evolvment and understanding. It is obviously impossible to give a description of all the variant and tangent conditions and degrees of conditions.

This is the reason you must guard against any assumption that, "This, then, is what I can expect to find." What you will find may or may not be described or ever touched upon in these pages. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Your experience is being determined now by the manner in which you are building, or not building, a solid spiritual foundation. The present tends to determine the future.

Chapter IV

THE CAUSE OF TRANSITION

Now we can answer the question as to what happened to Joe when he did not survive on the earth plane after the car struck him. Let us examine for a few moments just what occurs at the moment of

"death" or transition, and how it is accomplished. The explanation usually given for the cause of it is that the Soul leaves the body. And normally perhaps that is sufficient. But what does it mean?

The circumstances of transition vary greatly, of course. As we have found, one passes away peacefully in his sleep; another, as in the case of Cyril, passes away as the result of a severe illness; others, like Joe and the young Vietnam soldier, meet death as the result of a violent accident. It is commonly said that all these individuals have passed on as the result of anyone of an almost endless number of "causes." In actual fact, all these vast numbers of so-called causes without exception are the result of one common cause. What, then, is this event which occurs in all transitions?

You might say, "Well, I have heard that there is something which is called the silver cord that connects the immortal Self with the physical body. Transition occurs when this silver cord is severed."

It is true that the silver cord does remain intact during the entirety of one's physical lifetime. It allows the immortal Self to leave the body at times, maintaining it through the life-line of the silver cord. But the silver cord, that thread of divinity connecting the eternal you with your physical body, is never actually severed in the sense of being torn from the body. More appropriately, the silver cord releases the physical body.

The one thing that brings about all transitions and transition does not occur until this happens is an action by a part of the individual's inner self which is very wise, being a literal part of omniscient God. Regardless of the multitude of circumstances necessitating it, transition occurs when, and only when, that inner God part of you decides the time has come to turn the switch, as it were, and cut off the flow of vital life energy that has kept the body "alive." To be sure, the outer circumstances are the cause of this action on the part of the inner self. But even in the event of violent accident, as in Joe's case, where sudden transition occurs, where the flow of life energy is cut off instantly, this "death" is the result of an instantaneous decision on the part of the individual's inner self that the physical body is no longer useful. The accident in this case was the cause of the immediate decision to cut off the flow of life energy, but the turning off of this figurative switch was the cause of the transition itself, not the accident per se.

What is the fate of the silver cord after being disengaged from the now inert and lifeless body? Normally a period of time up to three days

elapses between the moment of actual transition-the moment when the Soul cuts off the flow of vital life energy to the body-and the final disengaging of the silver cord. This period of time, for those who need it, is for the purpose of allowing the individual a thread of contact with physical life while he makes his initial adjustment to his new environment. The amount of time needed is determined in large part by the spiritual progress the individual has made on the earth plane.

There are spiritually sensitive people who, while attending a funeral service, have observed the individual above his body in the casket. This is a case of one being loath to leave the physical body. As Ramacharaka, one of the more advanced Teachers, explained, "It takes time for the individual to adjust to the reality that he can no longer inhabit the shell which he has left." Others, though it happens much more rarely, are able to complete the release immediately upon the turning of the switch that cuts off the flow of life energy to the body.

There are differences, of course, not only in degrees of spiritual progression but in states of consciousness, which serve to create many different types of experiences for people immediately upon their transition. We are told by one of the Teachers, "At least fifty percent of the people who come to our side do not realize that they have left their bodies, and will not believe it. Many people are willing to be taught; many of them permit us to prove to them that this is true, but countless numbers of them stubbornly refuse to listen and to be shown." Joe, you will recall, had been wandering around for some four months of earth time, still refusing to believe that he was "dead." And those like him, unprepared for transition, are legion.

One other brief comment is in order before leaving the subject of transition. There are those who believe that if on one's death-bed he makes repentance for what by this time he is willing to concede have been his sins, the keeper of the pearly gates will roll out the red carpet for him rather than send him to the hell where all his associates probably thought he would go anyway. It has been thought that if he makes his plea impassioned enough and fervent enough he can wipe out an entire lifetime of wrongdoing and, in fact, even crime.

It is fortunate that this is not true. Life bestows no special sentimentality upon an individual at the moment of transition. The laws of Being are applied impersonally at all times. On both sides of the doorway called transition there is only justice and balance. Every "i"

must be dotted and every "t" must be crossed. What a man sows, that shall he also reap.

This does not negate anything that has been said about a loving and forgiving God. But forgiveness is not something that is bestowed upon you by a sentimental God who because of your eleventh-hour "repentance" decides that maybe you're not such a bad sort after all; it is, rather, the result of your living the spiritual laws of your own being and is a process that works from the inside outward.

Lastly, there is an altogether fallacious idea, held unfortunately by countless numbers of individuals, to the effect that when you die and go to the other side you have bestowed upon you, as a sort of by-product of the process, a very high degree of wisdom, perhaps almost approaching omniscience. Many stand in awestruck reverence in the presence of any "message from the other side." It would be sacrilege, they feel, not to accept unquestioningly anything and everything that comes from that mysterious realm.

As we saw in the case of Joe, you approach and arrive at that doorway having certain characteristics and personality traits, with certain spiritual assets and perhaps certain moral ineptitudes. The process of changing planes neither takes anything away from you nor bestows anything upon you. It merely separates you from your physical body. You will be exactly the same Bill or Mary Smith that you are here.

Thus, just as you do not listen spellbound to every traditional Tom, Dick and Harry while still on the earth plane, with their sometimes ill-conceived, as well as sometimes actually nefarious, advice, so you would not listen to the same conglomerate of advice just because the same Tom, Dick and Harry have now gone to that mysterious and greatly misunderstood other side.

Four months of roaming around following his transition had not changed Joe a particle, except to increase his confusion and frustration because he was not able to communicate with those still in physical bodies. Thus, putting even a particle of credence in any message or advice from Joe at that point would have been, to say the least, somewhat less than advisable. Communicants from the great beyond-the other side-need to be checked with certainly no less care than those still in their physical bodies.

Chapter V

ON THE THRESHOLD

When Joe left the AUM meeting on that Wednesday night in 1958, under the care and guidance of Aramias, after having promised to ask for help, he was conscious of a sensation of contriteness. This was a new feeling for him; and had he experienced it on the earth plane he would have been suspicious of its presence in his make-up and would have banished it immediately. But now he felt no resentment toward this sensation. He was, indeed, mildly surprised to find that he rather welcomed it. It somehow seemed appropriate.

For what seemed to Joe to be a considerable time he accompanied Aramias in deep silence, completely absorbed in his own thoughts, cantered around his encounter with this group of people he had just left.

"Those people," he thought. "I wonder why they seemed so different from the people I used to hang around with when I was over there where they are. I guess they are right when they say I'm not over where they are. And they couldn't have heard me, except for that lady I had to talk through. They sure seemed like a bunch of good guys. And they want to help me. "

Joe spent a few moments contemplating his new sensation of having someone wanting to be of service to him. And he found he was warmed inside by the thought that someone cared what happened to him. Previously, on the earth plane, he would never have admitted to this soft-hearted attitude and feeling.

"They sure did one thing for me," Joe continued in his thoughts. "They made me realize I'm not happy in this wandering around over here.

I'm not getting any place.

What did they say I ought to do? I know, they said I ought to ask this teacher for help. Well, maybe I ought to. Gee, I think I will."

He turned to speak to Aramias, to ask for this help he had been assured Aramias could give him; and at the same moment Aramias was by his side, speaking to him in the kindest voice Joe had ever heard.

"Your desire has been heard, my brother. We are so happy that you have decided to turn your eyes to the Light, and we will give you all the help we can so that you may continue through the Valley of the Shadow as soon as you are ready."

As Aramias was speaking, a priest appeared at his side and spoke to Joe.

"You have called for help," he said. "Henceforth I will be your guide."

There was a moment during which Joe felt hostility and resentment for the intrusion of this newcomer, but the feeling was quickly swept aside under the impact of a sense of utter contriteness, and he pleaded unashamedly for the priest to help him resolve the frustration and confusion. Never in his life, he thought to himself, had he ever wanted anything as deeply as that which he felt somehow intuitively that this kindly priest could give him. The priest felt the sincerity and the depth of Joe's desire and was, in turn, grateful for it. It would enable him to be of correspondingly greater service to Joe.

Aramias left Joe in the care of the priest, who now bade Joe be seated, so that they could talk things over. The priest realized that the first and most difficult task was to convince Joe that he had made his transition—that he was what those still on the earth plane call "dead." This was not easy; Joe's stubborn refusal to believe, and his insistence that he was very much alive and always had been kept surging to the fore as an impediment to the progress the priest was making. It became a tug of war between Joe's unwillingness to accept the fact of his passing and his now-mounting trust in this understanding priest.

The priest was patient and unhurried, and before long Joe began hesitating thoughtfully for a brief moment or two between hot-headed retorts that he was not dead. These periods of deep thoughtfulness slowly and gradually increased in duration and at length the priest was gratified to find Joe asking for clarification of things he had just told him.

At last Joe's counterblasts ceased altogether and he sat for a while in deep contemplation. The priest wisely did not impinge himself upon Joe's silence.

"You know, Father," Joe said at length, "a lot of what you say don't make sense to me. I can't understand it at all. But a lot of what you say does make sense, sort of. And I wish you'd take me in hand, if you got time, and get me straightened out better."

"In order for me to be of the most help to you," the priest explained, "you must face the truth about yourself. You must realize and accept the fact that you are no longer of the earth plane. You must accept the fact that you are what you formerly would have called dead. You must deeply and sincerely desire to sever the hold which the earth has on you. You must be willing to release the earth from your own grasp and look to your new future. I cannot show you the nature of that future until you make your definite and final decision to release the past. This no one can do for you. You must stand alone, come to terms with yourself and decide what you want your next step to be. I will now leave you for the time being, that you may make your decisions and that they may be yours wholly. I will be waiting for you if you want to come to me."

Joe then found himself alone. He was not sure where the priest had gone, and his immediate reaction was one of fear. He had found someone who he felt could help him, and now suddenly this person was gone. But the fear passed as his trust in the understanding priest came to his rescue. He knew intuitively that he could, in truth, trust this man unequivocally and expect him to be there when needed.

Joe then engaged in a short time of contemplation of this trustworthiness—more in the sense of basking in it, however, than in wondering about its actuality. His faith had become great enough that when his thoughts turned to the decisions he knew he must make, he realized there was no doubt as to what they would be. With high resoluteness he turned and faced a direction that was quite new to him.

He could not be sure, later, whether he had started actually walking in that direction or whether he simply seemed to be walking. He was, however, definitely aware of a strange and unaccountable feeling of sudden changes in his make-up and his consciousness which he could not understand, nor did he attempt to analyse. Whatever the processes were, they were pleasant to him. The more he allowed them to

come to the surface, the more they seemed to impel him in his new direction.

After what seemed to Joe to be considerable time, he noticed an approaching diffusion of light. There was something about it that was appealing to him, so much so that he strained all his resources to draw it closer. Then suddenly it was as if an indescribably beautiful dawn had broken, dispersing the darkness of the night. He felt intensely grateful that he had got through whatever it was from which he had just emerged. It was as if a tremendously heavy weight was suddenly lifted from his shoulders and he was conscious of a sense of release which he had never before experienced.

As he turned to look about him, he again found himself face to face with his kindly priest. It did not occur to Joe to ask why he had been left alone or where the priest had been. Joe somehow realized with an inner knowing that the journey he had just taken was vitally essential to his progress and his welfare and that he had indeed had to make it alone and because he wanted to.

"Welcome to the Summerland," the priest said warmly.
"Welcome to your new home."

"You know somethin, Father?" Joe asked a bit agitatedly. "I don't know what's goin' on around here. I don't know what to make of this business of bein' dead and alive at the same time. I guess I'm dead, all right, like you said, but I never felt more alive in all my life. How do you explain that?"

"You will learn, my son," said the priest compassionately.

Chapter VI

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

What was this that Joe "went through"?

In a previous chapter it was pointed out that what is found beyond the doorway of transition is analogous to the infinitude of snowflakes, each with its unique differences. And so it is not possible in a single

discussion, or a single book, to portray what lies beyond that doorway for everyone.

But just as we can describe some of the basic characteristics of snowflakes generally, we can also discuss in broad outline some of the things that are usually encountered by those making their transition.

Just as the earth is the natural habitat of individuals still in physical bodies, the equally natural habitat of those who have made their transition is what has been called the Summerland. But you do not find yourself in the Summerland immediately upon passing through the doorway separating the two worlds. There are certain steps to be taken, certain decisions to be made, certain things to be released. You are likely to carry through that doorway with you a certain attachment to things of the earth, a certain reluctance to leave the earth and the physical life you have known. This is particularly true if you have little or no spiritual foundation, and if your primary motivation and interests have centered around things of the earth. But you will have an opportunity to release the hold of the earth upon you and turn your face toward the Summerland. And this is more easily done by those who have some understanding of the process of transition.

Fortunately, help awaits those who are ready to receive it. Everyone who passes over is met by at least one inhabitant of the other side (someone he knows, if possible), who offers assistance and love and understanding. Here again, how one has lived the spiritual laws of his own being on the earth plane; what he has done with his life; the level of his spiritual understanding—these factors determine whether he will accept the proffered help. That moment of meeting constitutes a most vital crossroads for any individual. If he accepts the help offered and trusts those who offer it, he has nothing to fear and his progress is assured. If he is unprepared to accept the help, if he is too tied to the earth, his progress may be greatly delayed. Upon Joe's sudden transition he had been met with understanding compassion, but he had brusquely swept aside the offer of help, since at that time he was not ready to accept what he so eagerly sought after his months of wandering.

So at this point, standing just beyond the doorway of transition (through which you have just passed), you are separated from the Summerland, your natural habitat on that plane of your existence, by what the more advanced Teachers call the Valley of the Shadow. This should not be confused with another concept involving the valley of the

shadow of death, mentioned in the 23rd Psalm. Going through the Valley of the Shadow refers to an area of consciousness in which you sever your ties with earth. There is a re-alignment and re-adjustment of the over-all pattern of your motivations, your attachments and your spiritual understanding, from which you emerge onto the multi-dimensional level of the Summerland, your new dwelling place.

It should be pointed out that when we speak of going "through" the Valley of the Shadow, this does not refer to space or to units of distance. The Valley of the Shadow is a condition, a state of consciousness. Or perhaps we should say it is a process during which certain vitally important changes take place in the consciousness. In a sense and to a degree, it is a cleansing process. It is a process of freeing yourself from your physical connections. It is a severing of the ties which would otherwise hold you to the earth and prevent your completing your transition.

Since the Summerland exists in a dimension vastly different from the three-dimensional world of the earth plane, it entails different thought processes. Thus, to use an extremely rough analogy, going through the Valley of the Shadow involves a process of shifting mental gears. Until you go through it, after going through the doorway of physical transition, you continue to think in earth terms, for the most part using three-dimensional, thought processes. Not until you go through the Valley of the Shadow do you begin to think in Summerland terms.

So immediately upon making your transition you stand at the crossroads. There are those who offer you their loving and understanding help in realizing where you are, in making certain adjustments, and in facilitating your progress, but there also remain those attachments you have toward things of the earth. Furthermore, there is your relationship to certain people still on the earth plane, whom you may be loath to leave. And in some cases, in their lack of understanding, they may be trying to pull you back and continue to hold you to them.

Dr. James H. Hyslop, one of the more advanced Teachers, has explained, "This interim, when you must make your own decision as to whether you will stay here or go on, is what we call the Valley of the Shadow. It is a place where only you can make the decision. We cannot

help you. It is the valley of your decision which way you will go. We could just as well have called it the Valley of Decision."

Another of the Teachers, a Master stated, "It has been given different names by different people, but the name is unimportant. We call it the Valley of the Shadow, because is it not that vale of darkness between the separation from loved ones, until one reaches the bright sunshine?"

Keep in mind that these concepts-those of cleansing, mental gears, and so on-are only the roughest of analogies, the reason being that we do not on this plane have the use of that additional understanding to comprehend a more accurate description, nor even words with which to describe it. Frequently the more advanced Teachers, referring to conditions in various areas over there, speak of the inherent inability of words to convey what they would like us to understand.

Many references have been made to the fact that at transition you leave your physical body behind. Perhaps you have wondered how you would identify yourself, or how others could identify you without the medium of a physical body with its distinctive features. Remember that you will continue to have a body, a finer-textured one. Joe continued on his way home after the car struck him, and he could not have done this without some kind of body. But this body was not visible to his family because of its higher vibratory rate.

Other than the differences in texture and vibratory rate your new body will be practically the same as the one in which you are now living, and it will be as "real" as the one through which you now express yourself. It is made of atoms, just as is your present body. The fact that atoms on the earth plane are much heavier than those in the spiritual realm accounts for the new finer texture.

From here back to the original source from which you came, and to which you will in time return, there are innumerable planes of consciousness and planes of expression. And for each of these planes you always need the kind of body, the appropriately-textured body, that will express your level of consciousness. As you progress into higher and higher levels, your progressive bodies will be of like kind. You will not at any time be without a body in which to function. You will also retain your own unique individuality as you progress from plane to plane.

Is it possible for you to pre-determine what your own experience is likely to be when you go through the Valley of the Shadow? You are doing that right now. Furthermore, the manner in which, and the extent to which, you are expressing the spiritual laws of your being now are telling you how you will cope with the Valley of the Shadow, as well as the ease (or lack of it) with which you will make this first major adjustment. But the details of what your particular experience will be are indeterminable.

Is it possible then to present a typical account of someone's passage through the Valley of the Shadow? No, because there are no "typical" experiences over there. Every individual is unique to himself.

You have already read the accounts that show how two men Joe and the young soldier coped with their new experience. Joe, being tied to the earth, went through quite a long period of wandering and uncertainty. The soldier, however, seeing his inert body lying on the ground, knew because of his earlier training that the first thing for him to do was to turn his back on things of the earth-including his useless physical body.

"So I took that first step and started on my way," he continued, "and made what seemed to be a long journey. In time it got very foggy. It was a light fog, not a dark or wet one. I kept on going, and when that fog cleared my father and mother were waiting until I got out of it, and they were there to greet me." Remember that when Joe emerged into the light, the priest was there awaiting him.

This standing at the crossroads, as in this young man's experience, is where many individuals attempt to turn back to the earth which they know. Their progress can thus be very greatly delayed, depending upon the extent of the hold the earth and the material things of the earth have on them. All such delay, and the suffering and frustration attendant upon it, can be completely avoided by the simple measure of one's acquiring an understanding of what is involved, so that he can make the choice to leave the earth behind him (when his time comes for him to make that transition).

Note how graphically this soldier described the Valley of the Shadow and his journey through it. It was clearly a fog he was in, and he had to "go through it" alone. He knew that no one else could make the decision for him. His parents were waiting to greet him, but they

could do nothing for him until he came out of the fog-which he was able to do easily and relatively quickly.

Here we see an excellent example of the value of a solid spiritual foundation. It had been nine years since he had had his parents with him, but their early teachings remained firmly embedded as a part of his state of being. Thus it was that he could say, "When I stood alongside my body in all that mess there in Vietnam, I knew I had to do something about it. I couldn't stay there, and I felt a pull, an inner something. I didn't care what happened to that body. When I was going through that fog, I got to thinking of all those things my parents had taught me, and what they meant."

When he turned his back on his body and all the things of the earth which it symbolized, he was not severing all connection with the earth, as his return to speak through Mrs. Gause indicated. He was simply effecting a transfer of his primary attachment. While still in his physical body he obviously was attached to the earth and the things of the earth, but immediately upon his transition he transferred his attachment and his interests to the spiritual plane, which he now understood to be his new place of residence. He was merely changing his place of abode.

Does this young man's account of his going through the Valley of the Shadow mean that you, too, will probably experience it as being like a fog? Not necessarily. It cannot be repeated too often that what happens there is as uniquely individual as finger prints.

Chapter VII

EARTH'S SPIRITUAL SMOG

Upon his arrival in the Summerland Joe's first reaction was one of wonderment and gratitude for being there. He understood extremely little about what was happening to him. But what he did know and understand was that his morale was higher and healthier than at any time he could remember. He was aware of what he thought was a sort of inner cleanliness, the degree of which he had never before experienced. Its strangeness to him was equalled only by his sincere gratitude for it.

When he first met his new friend, the priest, after going through the Valley of the Shadow, Joe tried to thank him profusely for his help;

but words as usual seemed to be woefully inadequate. He considered the priest to be his personal benefactor and liberator.

His gratitude extended to Leonard Worthington and members of the AUM Foundation, and he wished that he could personally thank them also for the encouragement they had given him. Joe's amazement at the great change in his circumstances and the change in himself almost approached a state of minor confusion. Sensing this, the priest suggested that Joe rest temporarily. This rest, the priest indicated, would result in Joe's being able to assimilate the simple fact that he was there and that considerable changes had taken place in him. Joe did not feel that he needed rest, but his faith in the priest prompted him to follow the advice.

And so he slept, but not for long. Having boundless energy and a mammoth curiosity about this "place" called the Summerland, and having accepted the reality of what had happened to him, he needed less sleep than most new arrivals from the earth plane of existence.

Upon his awakening, Aramias greeted him and, like the priest, welcomed him to the Summerland.

"I don't know what this Summerland stuff is all about," Joe answered in his still-brusque and unpolished manner. "I don't know much about anything, I guess, but I do know I want to say thank you for what you did. And the same thing goes for that Father. He's wonderful, you know that? He's just about the only guy I ever knew that didn't try to kick me around. And you know somethin' else? I sure do wish I could say thank you to that bunch I talked to that encouraged me the way they did and talked me into askin' for help."

"Possibly that can be arranged," replied Aramias. "How? When?" Joe asked excitedly.

Sensing Joe's genuine sincerity, Aramias answered,

"If you truly want to thank them personally, you may do so. We will arrange a time when I can go with you, to protect you on your journey."

"I can take care of myself," Joe came back quickly. His muscular frame and hard fists had not always been as idle as during recent months.

"There are vibratory belts of negation surrounding the earth," Aramias continued as if Joe had not spoken. "This does not mean very much to you now, but you will come to know very well indeed what these bands of negation are and the nature of them.

"You see, every individual lives constantly in a certain personal atmosphere which he creates for himself, from within himself. All mental states and emotional tones are, in a very real sense of the word, energy vibrations. These energy vibrations surround each individual to form his personal aura. And inasmuch as these vibrations have colour (which you will now be able to see, having joined us on our side), every individual is surrounded by a mass of colour, as well as sound."

Joe listened with intense interest; for although most of the words Aramias used were strange to him, he was still able to see somehow what these vibrations and auras were all about. Aramias went on to explain that the colour of an aura is determined by the quality of the person's mental and emotional processes and by his spiritual status. One aura might be a combination of delicate hues blended together harmoniously to form a scintillatingly beautiful pattern of colour. Another might be made up of colours that are cloudy and muddy and dark and inharmonious, having vibrations which are both unpleasant and inherently destructive.

"These emanations, this personal aura, surround all individuals on both sides of the veil of transition," Aramias told Joe. "The emanating energy has a rate of vibration which is just outside the range of vision of most of the earth's inhabitants-though, as we have noted earlier, some people have a slightly wider range of vision and can see these auras. The colours, and the pattern of colours, making up an aura change from time to time, depending upon the mental and emotional and spiritual state of the individual.

"And just as each one has his own personal aura," Aramias continued, "there is also a collective and composite aura for mankind as a whole-for the earth itself. This aura surrounds the earth just as the individual's aura surrounds the physical body."

Certain bands of energy frequencies with which science works every day are known to have destructive potentials. When energy vibrates at the frequency known as X-rays, for example, its use on human tissue, if in too great quantities, can be highly destructive. For this reason its use is rigidly controlled and restricted to those who have

had highly specialized training. Different bands of vibrations, on the other hand, are equally beneficent and constructive.

Certain colour vibrations have definite healing qualities, and scientists are discovering healing qualities in ultra-high-frequency sound waves. In like manner the vibrations set in motion by love, understanding, forgiveness and compassion are highly beneficial.

But their opposite-greed, avarice, hate, jealousy, lust for power-are. also opposite in their effect. Scientists are coming to a much greater understanding of the deleterious and destructive effect of negative emotions on the body tissues; and you can imagine their much more harmful effect on the individual's spiritual progress.

"And so it is," Aramias continued, "that, increasingly for many years, these negativistic impulses and motivations have predominated in mankind. The result is that the earth has built up its own harmful and destructive aura around itself. When one returns to the earth plane, he must penetrate these destructive bands. Since this can bring about extremely harmful results, it is essential that one have protective measures before he enters the earth's atmosphere.

"You have just arrived on our side. You have had no experience in coming and going between the two planes. It is commendable that you wish to return and personally express your appreciation to those who gave you so much love and encouragement. Perhaps in time, after you have received intensive training in providing your own protection, you may be allowed to come and go by yourself. In the meantime, it will be well to grant your wish that you return and thank those individuals. I will accompany you to the earth, in order to assure your complete protection."

"You know somethin'?" Joe asked, after having appeared to be lost in thought. "I don't know much about this place where I've come to live, but I like it. And you know some thin' else? You folks around here are on the level more than anybody I ever knew. I don't know how I know it, but I know that I can trust you all down the line. It wasn't that way where I used to live."

Chapter VIII

GRATITUDE

Later, while many things were converging into Joe's thinking, and he was trying to see them all in perspective, Aramias approached. Joe followed him unquestioningly as they began their journey back to the earth. The sensation, as Joe would have described it, was like that of being disoriented: he seemed to feel that he was going somewhere but was confused as to the direction of it. But the feeling of confusion was actually only slight and momentary, and as it disappeared his directional orientation was again established.

And Joe was delighted suddenly to take note of his whereabouts. He and Aramias were approaching Mrs. Gause, who was seated before the same group of AUM members Joe had visited previously. As Joe and Aramias approached her, Mrs. Gause challenged them silently, to be sure they were members of the more advanced Group, before she loaned them her vocal mechanism.

It will be remembered that when Joe first visited this group he had not completed his transition. Not having gone through the Valley of the Shadow, he was still tied to the earth. For this reason, and also because of his uncouth manner, Aramias had taken exceptional care in protecting Mrs. Gause. He had seen to it that Joe "kept his distance" and had no contact with her. As Joe later explained it, he "talked into that Teacher and then that Teacher talked into the lady."

But Joe's going through the Valley of the Shadow had had a tremendously calming effect upon his belligerent hot-headedness. Thus, at this visit, he was allowed to speak to the group directly, through Mrs. Gause.

"Hello!" he called out enthusiastically. "Ya didn't think I'd be back so soon, didya? D'ya know who I am? D'ya know?"

There were several affirmative but surprised responses.

Well, first, lemme tell you," he began spiritedly, "that that guy you called. . . excuse me, that one you called a guide isn't a guide at all. He's one of the higher-ups. But he said I could come. He said I could come and tell you what I have to say.

"First, I'm gonna say thank you! And gees, I mean it! But then I have some other things to tell you. I don't know what to say first. You

know, my voice is different, dontcha think? Well, you see. . . Well, it's hard to tell you about these things. I thought I was myself, and I wasn't myself. And then this wonderful person in white-Aramias, that's his name-he got me to one side and he showed me what a messed up thing I was. Well, I even talk different now. I use different words. You see, I can talk more like you talk. You wait and see.

"Well, you remember that when I was here before, you tried to get me to ask that guide, the one that brought me here, to help me get straightened out. You said all I'd need to do was just ask for help and I'd get all the help I needed. And I told you I'd give the thing a try. Well, to tell you the truth, I didn't have much hope, but I thought I'd keep my word. And after I had talked to Aramias you can imagine how it hit me when. . . What d'ya think happened to me? You know, I'm Catholic, and along comes a Father. Was I floored to see him standin' there by me! Because I haven't been to church since I can't remember when. Well, you know, he didn't lay me out. There's not one over here-over there that has been tough on me. I had it comin' but they don't kick you around. They don't send you to hell. At first I thought that was where the Father was gonna send me, but he didn't. He put his arm around me and he said, 'Now, my son, let's talk this over.' Do you believe that?"

"I certainly do," replied Leonard, with sincerity that was obvious to Joe.

"Well, he talked to me," Joe continued. "Then we sat down and we talked it over. And, you know, I'm dead but I'm not dead. I don't understand the whole business too well myself yet, but anyhow he told me why my family wouldn't talk to me and why you do talk to me. He told me that if I hadn't listened to you the other night I'd be on the downgrade. Maybe you can't believe that. But you know, I never had a chance here where you are now. I never got to do the things I wanted to do, so . . . well, you know. No, you don't know, but it was kinda rough.

"This Father told me that I could have a chance and be what I wanted to be. On the level! And I'm gonna be what. . . I guess you better not ask me yet because I got so many things ahead of me, I don't know what I'm gonna be. But I know I'm gonna get straightened out, and I'm gonna help the rest of the fellows, and I'm gonna show them what they can do too. Of course I gotta get myself straightened out first. After that is over, what I gotta do, then I'm gonna try to get other people to do

what these Teachers are givin' me a chance to do. Does that make sense to you?"

"It certainly does," answered Leonard, "and it's wonderful. "

"Well, I had to say that first," Joe went on, still talking as if his time were all too limited. "Now, I'm gonna say what I gotta say to you. You know I don't like that sob stuff, but if it hadn't been for you people bein' on the level with me, and believin' what I said, and not kickin' me out. . . if it hadn't been that you treated me the way you did. . . well, what's happened to me is all your fault. No, that's not what I mean. How d'ya say it?"

"Do you mean to say, because of you people?" Leonard helped out.

"Yeah, that's what I mean. It's because of you people here that I'm where I am and not in the mess I was in. You see? That's what I mean. And it's because of Aramias and my good old priest, God love his soul-maybe he's dead too, I don't know-but it's because of you and them that I'm here sayin' what I gotta say. And now unless you want to say somethin' to me, I gotta go. But before I go, I'm sayin' thank you, and believe me I mean it."

"It is for us to thank you for giving us the opportunity to do for you what you are going to do for others. "

"You know, that's a swell way for you to put it . . . Maybe some day I'll learn to talk the way you do," Joe said wistfully.

"Well, this we know," Leonard went on, with sincere encouragement. "We know that your heart is right. Watch out for that big soft heart of yours, because you love people as much as we love you."

"They're gonna keep a close check on me, so I don't think I'm gonna get in a mess like that again. And I'm not afraid, either, because now I'm with people that are on the level. They're all right! They mean it. You don't know what it means to me not to get kicked in the shins. But I haven't had one kick since you talked to me the other night. So I'll try to keep things goin'."

At this point Joe's innate humor could no longer contain itself. Addressing a lady who had been dressed in red the last time, he chided good-naturedly, "You don't have on your red dress tonight, do you?"

"But you have one!" he added, turning to another. "You thought I couldn't see color, didn't you? Well, I can. We can see you. Oh, just one thing. Can I say this?"

"Surely," Leonard replied.

"That's one thing that makes it tough on you folks.

"I don't mean just you people that are sittin' right here. I mean people generally. We can see you, but you can't see us."

"Oh, by the way, Joe!" Leonard called quickly, as if to try to reach Joe before he left.

"Yeah?" drawled Joe.

"Tell all those over on your side that we love them, and we will serve them as best we can."

"Sure, pal, I'll tell them. I oughta know. So long."

Chapter IX

SPIRITUAL NO-MAN'S LAND

At this point Joe's adjustment to his new life was far indeed from complete. Yet even though it had been a comparatively short period (by our standards of measuring time) since his liberation from the condition in which Aramias had found him, he was beginning to manifest a degree of understanding of the other side, his present abode.

Upon his return there after his second visit to the AUM group, he sought out his new friend and teacher, the priest. The many questions Joe had were running through his mind faster than he could give expression to them, and he was bombarding the priest with inquiries in such rapid order that the priest had no time to give adequate answers to all that Joe wanted to know. Finally they both laughed at the ridiculousness of the situation, but their laughter was also due to the satisfaction on the part of both of them that Joe had accepted his new life and was so eager to learn all about it.

"Well, Joe, which of your many questions shall I answer first?"

"I guess what I really wanna know is what was happenin' to me durin' all the time I was roamin' around from place to place, tryin' to get somebody to talk to me. I can sorta understand bein' dead. But why the big difference between the way I was then and the way I am now? Seems like I was goin' around in a daze all the time. But now I never knew anybody could feel so much alive!"

"Let's think of transition as having two different phases. First is that period when the individual leaves the body and severs all physical connection with it. For our purpose here, we will call this the physical transition.

"In the second phase the individual goes through the Valley of the Shadow and emerges into the sunshine of the Summerland. Ideally the second phase follows immediately upon the first."

"I guess mine wasn't one of the ideal ones, huh?" Joe interrupted.

"No," smiled his friend. "But of course the period of time between the two phases was not nearly as long for you as for many who take years, or even centuries, of earth time to do what you did in several months. Of course, there are those rare instances where one's spiritual foundation makes it possible for him to blend the two phases into one, and when he leaves his body he immediately finds himself in the Summerland."

"Why does it take most of us guys so long to go through that Valley of Shadow?" Joe wanted to know.

"Unless a person has an adequate spiritual foundation and an understanding of transition, he is too confused to trust himself to the guides and helpers who meet him and offer to help him after he goes through the Valley. Upon stepping through the veil that separates the two planes, he finds himself standing beside his physical body, where he has lived during his lifetime on the earth. This in itself is confusing enough, but much more frustration is added when he finds that his body will no longer obey his commands to move. It is inert and lifeless and he does not know why. It is likely that at this time he does not know he is 'dead.' He comes to realize that he actually has no physical body, but he does not know what his condition is.

"Thus he becomes frustrated and too confused to accept the help that has been offered him. The love and understanding is there for him, but he is not ready to accept this yet. Not having any idea what is ahead

of him, and being afraid because he does not know, he turns to the only thing he does know – the earth. He allows himself to be pulled back toward the earth and its familiar comfort, whether he found it a happy place while he was there or not. It's easier than going ahead into something he knows nothing about. He becomes what we call 'earthbound'."

"So that's what I was up against!" exclaimed Joe, happy to have this insight into his past months. "Think of all the time I wasted, just because I was afraid to go on. All I did was try to convince people I wasn't dead."

"You weren't ready to be helped," answered the priest. "When you were ready for help you asked for it, and you received it immediately. Because you had tried so desperately to talk to people who were still in their physical bodies, and you had longed so deeply for some response from people, you needed a contact with people on the earth plane who could respond to you. This is the reason you were taken to Leonard and other members of the AUM group. You talked to them through Mrs. Gause; and after you had satisfied your longing for that contact, you were ready for the next step."

"Yeah, I know," said Joe slowly, as another ray of understanding broke through into his consciousness. "And you sure got that right about me bein' tied to the life I had had down there - or back there, or wherever it is; I still don't know. Durin' all that time, I wouldn't listen to anybody, especially them guys that tried to tell me I was dead. But finally I was lucky."

"There are countless others," the priest went on to explain, "who are not necessarily as tightly tied to the earth as you were, Joe - not necessarily as rigidly earthbound - but who, due to a lack of spiritual foundation, do not have the courage or the spiritual fortitude to take that vital step toward the Valley of the Shadow. They are neither of the earth nor of the Summerland; they are caught between the two. Being too bewildered and frustrated to make any decision, and thwarting the efforts of those who would help them, they become what is known as dwellers on the threshold. "

"What does that make of me?" Joe was instantly curious to know. "Is that what I was?"

"You were definitely earthbound," continued the priest. "You had very strong ties to the earth, which you were not ready to release. You continued to think in earth terms, you retained your earth appetites; the only difference was that you had no physical body. Yet having a body, a new body, that seemed to you to be physical, you were definitely still of the earth. But the dweller on the threshold is in truly a spiritual no-man's land. His condition can be even more frustrating because he actually has no ties to either plane. He is simply adrift in a spiritual void. And there, filled with frustration and fear, he will remain until something causes him to want help. This desire, welling up from within him, turns on a little light that flickers feebly. Then a teacher or helper is there instantly."

The priest went on to explain to Joe that the term "spiritual no-man's land" could, in its broad application, include both the dweller on the threshold and the earthbound individual. All those who are no longer in physical bodies and who have not gone through the Valley of the Shadow are in a spiritual no-man's land. Many of these individuals, depending upon their attachment to the earth, retain their earth, or physical-sense, appetites. As they wander around among those who still have physical bodies (but with whom they find frustratingly that they cannot communicate) they do discover, perhaps by accident at first, that by impinging themselves onto physical bodies they can share in these individuals' sense gratifications. Thus they find that they can satisfy vicariously their own retained appetites.

When this discovery is made, trouble starts; for many of those who are earthbound care not the slightest for the consequence of their acts, nor upon whom they impinge themselves. They can inflict their own desires and lustful appetites upon individuals still in physical bodies, causing them to do things they would not otherwise have done. A person's life is wrecked, for example, for drinking too much, and he maintains all the while that he does not know why he cannot control his craving. Even murders have been committed, with the murderers maintaining that they did not know what "possessed" them to do it. Impingements with less serious but still unfortunate consequences, the priest concluded, are extremely widespread.

Joe broke his silence. "Does this mean that all those crowds of people in this spiritual no-man's land you talk about are causing trouble for guys back on the earth?"

This is not necessarily true, the priest pointed out. Not all individuals inhabiting this spiritual no-man's land attach themselves to others. It is quite possible for one who has been well-principled in terms of everyday decency, honesty and fair play to become earthbound, too. It might happen to one who had little or no spiritual foundation or background. And if someone is so opinionated that he will not listen and learn from those who offer him assistance after he makes his physical transition, and if during his lifetime he had been wholly or predominantly tied to material things of the earth, he could easily find himself earthbound, in which state he would remain for varying lengths of time, wandering aimlessly and harming no one but himself by impeding his own progress.

Joe was curious to know if one who had a solid spiritual foundation before coming to this plane could remain earthbound. The priest assured him that it is indeed possible. In the case of such a person, however, the earthbound state is brought about by the misdirected feelings of those who are left behind.

"Those still on the earth plane, you see, indulge in paroxysms of weeping and mourning, which is equivalent to refusing to release the departed one. This refusal can operate as a magnet, holding him to the earth plane.

"The attitude toward death and what it is," continued the priest, "is most important not only to the one who is going through the door, but also to those whom he leaves behind. When the realization is reached that there is continuity in living, that one never 'dies', and that stepping through the veil separating the two planes of existence is only an incident in living, the treatment of the departed one will change. He will be released gladly by his family and friends, as they realize that it will then be possible for him to complete his transition and emerge into the Summerland. The departed loved one will have a thankful heart for this understanding and this release. "

Quietly and almost unnoticed, Aramias had joined the two, and up to this point had been merely listening to the priest's discussion.

"A spiritual foundation is most important," he offered. "In the old days, religions that taught hellfire and brimstone were not so good, we thought. Maybe they weren't. Those who came over then might not have agreed with us at first, or accepted what we said, and they may have been looking for the pearly gates and harps and couldn't find them; but

at least they were open to suggestions from us that they had made their transition. And when we could take them and show them that they had, they were willing to listen, because they had some spiritual foundation. Today more are coming over without any such foundation at all; they are in no way prepared to accept any sort of life beyond physical death."

Joe wondered about one of the fellows he had been hanging out with before he first appeared at the AUM group. "You know, I think that guy had a hand in crime of some kind. And one of the Teachers around here said he had committed suicide. And if you can believe it, he was even more mixed up than I was."

"Yes, he would be," Aramias told him. "The state of mind that prompted him to resort to suicide as a way out would inevitably add greatly to his confusion following his transition."

"I guess they have to be punished for stuff like that, don't they?" asked Joe. "What kind of punishment will that guy get?"

"There is no punishment on our side, Joe, for suicides or anything else. Punishment is the way that man, in his limited vision, has set himself up as the judge of the actions of others. Man fails to see the perfection of God in all things. Man feels anyone who acts differently from the way he acts is wrong and often punishes another for acting in this different way. Here, we inflict no punishment. There is only that which one gives to himself as he sees the truth about himself; and 'punishment' becomes willingness to work out one's own 'salvation', if I may borrow a word in common use on the earth plane. Just as we have no 'punishment', we also have no 'salvation'. An individual 'saves' himself when he looks back over his lifetime on earth, sees his errors, and resolves to redeem himself for those errors by living another lifetime and so progressing on the spiritual path by dotting all his 'i's' and crossing all his 't's'.

"Those who are catapulted into the other world, in whatever manner, are always given special attention, but keep in mind that this special attention is not necessarily the same in all cases. It varies with the circumstances, and these circumstances include the state of the victim's mental and spiritual being."

During this period of Joe's early development he had many counselling sessions with Gyril, the man whose transition was described earlier, and who is now a Teacher. Although Joe realized that he would

require much preparation and training before being qualified to do so, he had by now decided that, among other things, he would like to return to the earth as a Teacher for the more advanced Group, like Gyril and Aramias.

"Tell me this," Joe asked Gyril during one of their discussions in connection with this possibility. "What would I say in case somebody asked me to explain what I meant if I said somethin' about 'above' the earth plane?"

"We are frequently questioned about our use of that term. Here again, we encounter the inherent limitation of words, which for the majority of people on earth are essentially the only means of communication. This applies to both the communication between themselves and between their plane and ours.

"Our use of the term 'above' the earth plane is not intended to imply any location in space, with one plane being situated directly underneath another. But while this spatial concept is inadequate, we have no other way of explaining it. 'Above' the earth plane refers to a sphere or dimension where, freed from the limitations of the three-dimensional physical world and consciousness, life is lived under conditions benefiting multi-dimensional spheres. But, having to use words with which to communicate with people on the earth, you will find it impossible to describe just what most of those conditions are."

"I sure have found out that much," commented Joe, making a quick comparison of conditions on the earth and in the Summerland, and realizing he could never have explained the Summerland to his family back "home."

"If there is this kind of 'above' the earth, is there a 'below'?" he then asked Gyril.

"Yes, there are other spheres below the earth plane. And although these terms 'above' and 'below' do not have any relationship to space, they are not altogether inappropriate, because they do represent a progression upward. The first sphere 'below' the earth plane is inhabited by those who have given free reign to the animal passions of their lives in the physical body.

"There are many spheres below that, which I shall not describe, even to you. I was at one time taken there, that I might observe, but conditions there are too horrible to mention.

"You will, in time, have other contacts with the earth. Try at all times to speak to the people there only of that which will aid them in their upward progression. Satisfying their morbid curiosity by discussing with them the nature of conditions and of life in these lower regions certainly will not accomplish this purpose. I refer to it here, even to you, only as a precautionary measure, and to indicate to you that these regions do exist. But there are countless numbers of other things to which it is much more spiritually advantageous for people to give their attention." Once again Joe nodded understandingly.

Chapter X

ORIENTATION AND ADJUSTMENT

Because Joe's readiness to listen was such that he could be reached by members of the AUM group, Joe was now making enormous strides in his adjustment to his new life. Going through that process known as the Valley of the Shadow had lifted the scales from his eyes in such a way that he knew with a knowing that extends beyond intellectuality that here was his place of fulfilment. Here were people - and here was a place - that he could trust, he could put himself into unreservedly; he need not hold back any of himself.

These things Joe did. He plunged into his new life with an enthusiasm and boundless energy seldom seen by his guides and teachers. In some respects he was still very largely the same Joe he had been when he was a bartender. If the concept of a diamond in the rough were applicable to Joe, it could appropriately be re-stated to emphasize that as an unpolished diamond he remained rough indeed. He needed much refinement. He was still uncouth, his manner of speech and his command of the language left much to be desired, and one area of his thinking still revolved around his own muscles and brawn and fists as a persuasive and coercive device.

He came to meetings of the AUM group from time to time to report briefly on his progress, usually too busy to stay very long.

"What am I doin' now?" he replied one night in answer to Leonard Worthington's question. "I'm workin' with other guys like I was. Battin' people around and makin' 'em stand up and behave themselves, that's what I'm doin'. But we got a swell crowd over here now. And you know what? I got three assistants. They gotta take orders from me! Believe me, I can give 'em. And if people don't keep in line, I knock their heads together. I'm really goin' places!"

After Joe's appearance, Aramias came in to comment, "Our good friend the bartender is so busy and is working so hard he can hardly contain himself. He has no time to stop and consider himself; he wants to be everywhere at once. In time, he is going to learn a little more diplomacy. But he is certainly doing the work of half a dozen men. And since he is no longer here at the moment I can say this to you. He has not yet outgrown some of his ideas about how to handle people. In working with others, he'll go just so far, with all the patience and kindness and love. But if he doesn't get his desired response as quickly as he thinks he should, then he wants (as he puts it) to knock their heads together. His interpretation of it is that God takes off His gloves at times. And I guess some of them need the treatment he gives them. He said to me the other day, "I tell ya, doc, ya can't spare the horses around here!"

These things, however, were merely on the surface, and there was evidence that a refining process was already in progress. You will recall that on his second visit to the AUM group he spoke of wanting to improve his speech. But vastly more important, Joe was now motivated entirely differently. He became aware of an almost all-consuming drive in two directions. He wanted to learn all he possibly could about his new world, and as rapidly as possible. And, representing a diametric reversal of his earth plane attitude toward people, he found that he had a fiercely burning desire to help others who were in the condition he had been in earlier and to induce them to take that first step toward an improvement of their lot, just as he had been helped. This was very much in line with the general desire found in those on the other side who see so many ways they can be of service, either to persons still on the earth plane or to those who have left the earth but have not been able to complete their transition.

Joe's later report to the AUM members went like this: "Know what I'm doin' now? I can talk to the ones that are in the same kind of

mess I was in. Of course some of them tell me I'm nuts. And a lot of them don't like it because Father helps me, so if they don't like the Catholics they go off and get their own kind of preacher and let him help them. But I got a lot of guys that want to go on instead of hangin' around like I was.

"Aramias made me a promise. You know I helped a lot of guys get on the skids over there where you are. You know that. Of course I didn't know all of 'em who came to that bar; they sort of came and went. But there's a lot of 'em I did know, and I'm watchin'. And when they come over here, Aramias is gonna let me meet 'em, and I'm gonna try and help 'em stay over instead of always headin' back to the earth. That's my job."

Every individual is met upon his arrival on the other side, and always by one of his own kind. Those people whom Joe was to meet were of his own kind; he had been one of them. There was therefore more likelihood that they would listen to him than to one who did not from personal experience understand their needs and their make-up.

Joe's intense desire to learn, plus a natural gregariousness, prompted him to try to get information about one subject or another from almost every person he saw. From a number of conversations he gleaned that people arrive on his side in many conditions and many states of belief and awareness, all of which determine how they start their lives over there. From a man in a white robe whom he immediately held in great reverence, Joe learned about hospitals and their function.

"Had you supposed," inquired the man, "that there are no hospitals here?"

"Well, now, I guess I hadn't supposed much of anything," answered Joe slowly, as he tried to scan the years quickly to bring into focus what his beliefs about such things as this had actually been. "But if I'd of thought much about it, I guess I would of thought that you won't need 'em over here."

"We do indeed have hospitals," Joe's teacher explained. "We have facilities of all kinds to care for everyone who comes over. Each arrival brings his earth personality with him; and all personalities have certain needs, some of which are acute and require immediate attention.

"Many individuals make their transition from hospitals on the earth. Others, deprived of hospital care before making their transition,

feel the necessity for it. All these people bring with them their consciousness of a need for hospital care, and to fill that need there are hospitals awaiting them when they arrive here. They are attended by helpers who are especially trained to minister to them with loving care. They are given spiritual 'tranquilizers' that heal. They continue to receive the special care of the attendants until they no longer need it- until they are renewed and strengthened and are experiencing the wonders of their new life."

As Joe walked slowly beside his teacher-companion, listening to the explanation, he noted that they were beside a hospital, which at his request they entered. It was rather similar, he thought, to hospitals on the earth, except that this building was far more beautiful than any building he had ever seen anywhere, with a beauty unknown to those who see with earth plane three-dimensional eyes.

As he stood in the corridor of the hospital, in almost speechless wonder at the immensity of the structure, its beauty, and its critical role in the lives of new arrivals, he noticed a young woman performing quite menial chores who, nevertheless, appeared to be a person of great personal charm, intelligence and impeccable manner. The seeming paradox caused Joe to remark about it to his companion.

"It is not surprising that you notice her dignity and her unusual poise. That is one whom we call Frances. She was known to many on the earth. I told you a moment ago that all individuals leave the earth plane with certain needs. Some need, first, care in a hospital of this kind. Others are sorely and desperately in need of simply love. The needs vary greatly and, as I told you, we have facilities to care for all needs. Frances came to us from the earth a very haughty and disdainful person. It took a long time for her to realize-or, rather, to admit to herself-that what she needed first and foremost was to learn humility. She chose this work, with its menial tasks, as a means of fulfilling her need. She is learning her lessons well and will very soon be ready for other work which will fill other needs."

As they strolled slowly down the corridor and back outside again, Joe's teacher explained more about the different categories of new arrivals. In addition to those who are in need of actual hospital care, many individuals (in fact, virtually all who are not actually ill) need rest. Perhaps there had been a period of ill health before the transition; perhaps there was a weariness of both body and soul at the time. In all

cases, people bring with them the effects of whatever their lives on earth have been, and usually they are tired. Even the relatively short rest period Joe had agreed to had been necessary so he could assimilate his new findings and understandings and get acclimated to his new surroundings.

Joe, remember, was a person impelled by boundless energy.

He remarked, "I guess I can see people who were sick on that other plane havin' to start out in a hospital over here. But it beats me why anybody would go to a hospital just to rest, when they could be seein' all these fancy new things."

Gyril had joined them just in time to hear Joe's remark.

"I can understand why you say that, Joe. You might suppose that I, as a churchman, would have been at least a little prepared for life on this side. When I first came, I had many fascinating experiences (Cyril had been one in a high position in the upper hierarchy of one of the world's great churches.)

In meeting old friends, then, like you, I was amazed at all the beauties surrounding me and was avid to see everything at once. My friend suggested that it might be wise to rest, after the long illness my body had suffered. I was not of a mind to rest, but as my friend gently insisted, I found myself willing to agree to his suggestion, and I rested."

"How much time did you spend just restin'?" Joe asked.

"It's difficult now for me to think in terms of measures of time as we knew it on the earth plane," Gyril began.

"I know whatcha mean!" Joe interrupted. "Seems funny that we use to run our lives by minutes on a clock. Don't see many clocks around here."

"No," smiled Gyril. "There are some clocks, which are needed by those on this side who still require time that is regulated in hours and minutes as it was for them on the earth.

"I suppose I rested several months. But the time period varies with all individuals, according to their needs and their consciousness. The rest time serves another purpose: it further severs ties with the earth, the process of which began when they made their decision to go through the Valley of the Shadow."

"There is another point in connection with resting," said their companion in the white robe as he prepared to take leave of them. "There are those who upon their arrival go to sleep simply because of their consciousness. They left the earth plane with the thought that upon making their transition the normal thing for one to do is to go to sleep. So upon their arrival they certainly do go to sleep, just as they had expected."

"When all these people have finished their restin' and their sleepin' what do they do then?" Joe inquired.

"That depends very much upon what they want to do," Cyril answered. "Some people want to do nothing, and nothing is just what they do. But this is not generally true. Most people begin immediately preparing themselves for the 'life work' they want to engage in. That 'life work' may or may not have any connection with what occupation they had followed before coming here.

"There is one who had always wanted to study music but had not had the opportunity. You may be very sure that he will have the opportunity over here. He will devote as much time to this study as he cares to. There is another who wanted to be a teacher in a certain field, but because the earth's social order gave him only limited choice, his desire had to be suppressed. He will have the opportunity to become whatever kind of teacher he desires.

"You see, it's not like it was on the earth plane. There, when you were a certain age, you might have wanted to learn music or become a teacher but you would say, 'I'm too old now to learn something new,' or you wouldn't have time to go back to your schools and spend years learning a new skill.

"But here you're never too old. Time does not go by as years, as on the earth. And, besides, there isn't the necessity of a long period of instruction over here. When we desire to learn something, there are not the distractions as on the earth plane to keep one from learning; and the knowledge just seems to unfold before us as our desire to learn is demonstrated. Desire seems to be the key." Many, many individuals, Joe learned, after orienting themselves, find that their principal concern is for the welfare of people still on the earth. This concern may be directed toward a number of specific individuals, or it may be directed toward the partially blinded masses of struggling humanity generally. Furthermore, this concern may be of a strictly spiritual nature; it may be

in the medical realm; it may be scientific; it may be in the field of human relations; it may be in any area of human concern.

"Do these people go back to work on the earth plane, then?" Joe wanted to know.

"They certainly do. There is much that is being done in the way of assistance, mutual help, between the two planes. You will have an opportunity to observe many of these things and, to the extent that you like, participate in them."

Joe realized that as yet he was not prepared to be of much help in an inter-plane capacity, but he did know that he could talk to people of his own type who needed assurance and encouragement. He had chosen this means of service and was already preparing himself for this role.

After Joe thought about this exchange between the planes for a while, he asked Cyril, "Those people Aramias took me over to visit-those people who helped me at that Foundation thing-they could talk to me when nobody else could hear what I was tryin' to say. I have never figured out, could they see me?"

"Some of them could," Cyril told him.

"But they could all hear me when I talked through that lady?"

"Oh, yes," Cyril assured him.

"Suppose one of those people wanted to talk to me some time. Could he get in touch with me over here?"

"It is possible for people on the earth plane to summon those from our side when they want to have contact with them, even though this is not always a good idea. Some earth dwellers seek out and call back people from here just to get a comforting word of assurance that they are here, just to bolster their own sagging semi-conviction that there is a life beyond the grave.

"I don't think any of your Foundation friends would do that, for they would know that much harm may be done to the progress of the individual thus sought out. Many who have come here are not ready to return and, in fact, should not be interrupted in their own orientation and development by those whose lack of understanding imperils this progress.

"Your family, Joe, could have done you a disservice by mourning too greatly about you and by refusing to release you from their

consciousness. That would have tied you to the earth plane and made it more difficult for you to go on."

"I know," Joe responded. "But just s'pose somebody over there-maybe someone in that group - did want to have a sort of friendship with me," he pressed. "Or s'pose I wanted to go over and talk to one of them?"

"As soon as you have learned how to go through the earth's atmosphere alone," answered Gyril, "you will be free to come and go as you like. But you must remember that most people, even those in your Foundation, cannot see you and cannot even be aware of your presence in any way. Many people on the earth can see us and many can sense our being there in other ways. They have to learn to do this, in most cases; and they have developed through practice and through meditation an ability to increase their receptivity beyond the normal range of the five physical senses.

"So, Joe, whenever you have received instruction in returning and can accomplish it without harm to yourself, and whenever the friend you desire to contact on the earth plane has developed his receptivity to the point where he will be aware of you in some way, a delightful relationship and companionship between you two will be possible."

"But what about that lady I talk through? I can talk to her any time, can't I?"

"Yes, you can make yourself known to her, and she will be able to know you are there. But of course you are not going to go to her and speak to her just to prove to yourself that you can; and at the same time persons like her will not call you back just to prove that they can do it, either. They realize that passing between the two planes is a very serious matter."

"There's lots to learn," commented Joe.

"Indeed there is. When each of us comes to this side-and I found it to be true, too-it's like beginning our education all over again."

Chapter XI

MATURITY

From the time of Joe's first visit to the AUM Foundation he looked forward eagerly to each succeeding visit. He found that being there gave him a feeling closely akin to security, although by now he was becoming much more adjusted to his new life. And while he did not need the security that being at the Foundation meetings gave him, he found that he liked the comforting peace that accompanied each visit. Perhaps this was because of the contrast between what he was now developing into and what he had been at the time he first appeared to the group.

In the meantime his enthusiasm for work in his new life was mounting. When viewed in the light of his new life he was an adolescent, and his adolescent enthusiasm knew no bounds as he grew and studied and learned and worked. As a result of his rapid learning and growth, he was at this point a not-uncommon mixture 'of the new and the old'. Though he was rapidly acquiring the motivations and the values set forth by his teachers, there remained certain vestigial values and characteristics which had been part of his earth personality.

He would never have admitted it; perhaps he was only vaguely conscious of it; but there was a certain pride in his budding achievements, and he inwardly and secretly longed for the approval he knew he would get from the AUM group. This was another reason that his privilege of returning at the group for occasional visits was so meaningful to him, and he was deeply grateful to Aramias for making these trips possible.

Joe, of course, always enjoyed keeping members of the Foundation informed of his activities. Besides, there were certain things in his past for which he wanted to make amends, and he said during one visit, "When you get over here, and you look back and see all you've done... M..y G..O..S..H! Ya have to get busy! . . .

"So I have to give my time to helpin' straighten out everybody that I was responsible for givin' a kick and shovin' them off when I was down where you are. S'pose I let some dame who came in my bar have one too many. But it's her children that suffered the result of her drinkin' too much. So I'm responsible for those children too."

Joe's motivation was not wholly confined to his enthusiasm and personal pride in his accomplishments. Referring to the numbers of people who need help in their adjustment after transition, he said, "It sort of hits below the belt when you see all the great crowds over there, pushin' and shovin', tryin' to get back to the earth where they came from. And one little me here and one little me there, tryin' to talk to this mob, tellin' them and explainin'. So that's why we need your help here. When you get to workin' down here, and a lot of people get trained, then they can go to work as soon as they get up there. They're comin' over so fast that. . ."

At this point Joe suddenly became fervently impassioned. "Why don't you do somethin'?" he pleaded with great feeling, then added indictingly, "You folks are so dumb! Just like I used to be. While ya got the chance, why don't ya do somethin'?"

Then after a long moment's pause he went on, with more restraint and composure. "But does it do any good for me to preach? I can't expect ya to . . . But keep on the job, huh? And don't forget, I got three assistants!"

Most of the time during his visits was taken up by his expression of gratitude to the group for the help he had received and by his increasing appeals for more help to others. But he often expressed a lack of certainty as to his location now in relation to the earth-further indication that the process of transition and adjustment in most instances takes considerable time.

"You oughta remember what I say about us up here," he said once, "I mean, up there. Because when you do the kind of job you ought to do down there. . . down here. . . there'll be lots less for us to do up here. . . up there."

As to Joe's whereabouts, well, where was he actually? Where is this "place"? It is probable that throughout all the ages in which man has speculated on a life after death, the question asked more frequently than any other has been, "Where is this place?"

The uncertainty has been because of our dependence upon three-dimensional space concepts. And because this is still true, the question of location is one that cannot be answered to your complete satisfaction. It is perhaps not too difficult to think in terms of interpenetration of essences, so that, as one of the Teachers has said, "Your jet airplane

might go right down our front street. You would not know it, but it is in, I shall have to say, your 'atmosphere' about you."

In further trying to make it a little clearer this same Teacher used the term "condensed consciousness" in describing its "location." But he added, "I do not think any of you know what that means."

Another Teacher, attempting the same difficult task, said, "That which we call a sphere, or the next step, is in truth a consciousness, a state of being. When you leave your physical body, you are still yourself; your identity remains the same. Your outer garment has changed. You have a new body; that is automatic. It happens instantly, as soon as you are in what we will have to call an advanced consciousness. You say that your loved ones are over there. Where? They can be close to you or at a distance, according to both your consciousness and theirs. We cannot give you a geographical location. We cannot give you a place as you know a place, because there are no words to describe the interpenetration and inter-relationship of planes."

What about this "new" body you will have after transition? The new body you will inhabit will be very much like the physical body you will have just left. Why? Because in the law of spirit you will have stamped indelibly upon spirit-essence the quality and the type of your new body. It has been pointed out that you are determining now what you will find when you cross over. Stated perhaps more specifically, it could be said you are now creating the mold for the body you will inhabit at your time of transition. At that instant you immediately gather from your surroundings, from the elements, the spiritual substance for the creation of a new and finer body. You step into the new body like going from one room into another. The vibrations of your new body become stabilized at a point commensurate with your level of consciousness and spiritual awareness, and there you are!

Once Joe began to catch the vision of the potential which his new life on the other side opened to him, both his energy and his enthusiasm for his work were boundless. Aramias in one of his frequent reports pointed out, "Joe's hard-boiled character on the earth plane was simply to satisfy his ego. He had been deprived of everything he had ever wanted. He was pretty low on the scale, and he wanted much more than he had. He wanted to accomplish something; he wanted to succeed. His achievement was in titillating his own ego by being a tough one. When

that necessity was removed, he put all he had into the desire to be what he had originally wanted to be.

"Now he has paid his debt. He has crossed his 't's' and dotted his 'i's' in less time than one could imagine. He went at it with the same fervor, the same determination that he has displayed in everything. Joe was a diamond in the rough and that is the reason we brought him to you.

"He has recognized that there are *absolutely no limitations*. That is the determining factor, and that is what he is trying to bring out - the desire and the power. He can now speak with authority because he has made use of it. You can see the dynamic urge in him to get you to understand that you can do as he has done. When he caught the idea that the power was there to be used, he wasted no time with anything else. In the meantime, he is like a fireball in his determination to get back to earth and help others put that power to work."

Finally a day came when members of the AUM were greeted by a voice which they did not quite recognize. It did not seem to belong to one of their familiar Teachers, and yet the message was one of the same high spiritual quality to which they were accustomed.

"I want to speak to you briefly about prayer," he began. "I had a mother who prayed for me, and the more she prayed the worse I got. But she never stopped praying, God rest her soul, even when she got over here before I did. And even though she saw what I was, she kept on praying.

"My mother's prayers are answered, and I am trying to be what she saw in me because she believed in me. And I am going a little further-I am studying now to be a priest. It's a far cry from a rotten bartender to a priest."

Yes, the members of the group were right. It was Joe, but a very much changed Joe, poised, literate, and obviously with a great spiritual depth.

"Why am I going to be a priest? Because I feel that, as a priest, there are many people who will let me get closer to their hearts. At first I was one of them, and I could help them just so far. Then things stopped. But when I found that God could reach them through me, I wanted to be more than I was. So my mother's prayers are answered. Perhaps those prayers helped me to find this group here.

"Once you asked how you could help us. Extremely simple though it may seem, perhaps the greatest service you can render is the sending forth of a genuinely selfless love, unfettered by any negative emotion. This love is a powerful tool in the hands of those on the other side who have dedicated their lives to service to their less fortunate brothers. You can supply very valuable help through the simple process of loving. This may be to a specific individual or to individuals, or it may be a generalized and unspecified broadcast of love to any and all who need it on the other side.

"Just how those dedicated individuals are able to take this love and utilize it to its maximum spiritual potential need not concern us here. But an extremely crude analogy would be that just as an electrical transformer is able to step up the current into a higher voltage, so they are able to utilize love as if they were increasing its vibratory rate still higher. And the greater the vibratory rate of a power, the greater its potential for constructive use.

"Perhaps this gives you a brief glimpse of how important it is for you to send, as well as how grateful the dedicated individuals on the other side are to receive for their use, an understanding love. Remember that every single spiritually uplifting experience you have, whether you are experiencing love, tolerance, understanding, or just simple, wholesome, every-day happiness, is eminently 'share-able.' And there are those on both sides of the veil who sorely need your love.

"It's a wonderful thing for me, now a member of this Group, to come and talk with you. When I look back. . . but I don't like to do so, and looking ahead is much more important.

"Some day I'll see you all, and I can thank you face to face for all that you have done for me. And in doing for me, you have helped countless others you couldn't possibly know about. They help others in turn, and your chain goes on unbroken."

Unbelievable that this was the same Joe you met early in the book? All things are possible when given a chance-when understanding opens up to him or her on either side of the veil.

Chapter XII

THIS LIFE AND THAT LIFE

"Death," then, is more than a misnomer; it is an inherent contradiction. By connotation it attempts to refer to and describe a condition that does not exist, conceived as it is and defined by our dictionaries as a condition characterized by deprivation of life. Instead, you have seen that it is only an incident in living. It is a closing of one door which automatically opens another. It is a milestone, to be sure, and one that brings about considerable changes in environmental conditions. But it is a doorway totally without any potential for effecting a deprivation of life.

You have seen that when you go through that doorway you merely change your outer garment; you exchange your physical body, which has been your habitation during this particular sojourn into physical life, for a very similar body of quite considerably finer texture. But you have seen that you, as the inhabitant of those respective bodies, take your consciousness through that doorway with you and arrive on the other side exactly the same individual you were before passing that milestone.

You should realize by now that unless you properly prepare your consciousness to meet the circumstances involved in this change, you might find yourself mildly or greatly confused. You have read of some of the problems involved in individual adjustment to the new environment and have seen how specific individuals have met and coped with adjustment problems.

Perhaps you have heard it said that this life is a preparation for the next life. There are two things wrong with that statement. First, it is incorrect to say that the life you are living now is a "preparation" for that which lies beyond the veil. Second, there is no "next" life. You have only one life. You will change your environment, to be sure, but you will never "change" lives.

Just as this life is not a preparation for anything, neither is your "next" life to be considered a preparation for anything beyond that. They are two phases of the same life. To the extent that you are successful in eliminating one of these false impressions, the other tends to disappear also. Of course, how well you condition your consciousness to meet the circumstances of transition, and how well you

will live your present earth span in accordance with the basic spiritual laws of your being, will prepare you for the level or the plane to which you will be attracted when you get "over there."

In the fallacy that this life is a preparation for the next, there lies an implication that the "next" life is a final culmination of some kind in which eternity is to be lived out. Therefore, the present earth life must of necessity be a preparation for that eternity. But again, that phase of life beyond transition is not a final culmination of anything. It is eternity, to be sure, but no less or no more than your present moment. Now is eternity. To the extent that you are able to expand your consciousness to the point of freeing yourself from the shackles imposed by the concept of the passing of time, you will come to understand that now includes all the eternity there is.

In the sense in which we are using it here you cannot, therefore, prepare yourself for something that is already here. Since now is eternity, and eternity is a completed infinity, it follows that passing through time or through eternity is an impossible concept. Thus it is that you cannot prepare for an expected arrival of eternity.

But you can adjust more harmoniously to the spiritual laws of your own being which are inherent in eternity.

All things are endowed by their creator with some common denominator. That which is held in common with all that exists is a tendency to give of itself according to its nature. It is the nature of the sun to shine; it cannot do otherwise. It is the nature of the flower to give of its delicate fragrances; it, too, cannot do otherwise. It is the nature of the earth to give of itself. From the warm and bountiful land comes all that is necessary to sustain physical life harmoniously. If it seems at times to give forth less than perfection, it is because man himself has hampered it in its natural function.

There comes now a statement that at first glance may seem to be strange, if not highly questionable. Just as it is the nature of the flower to give of its fragrances, it is the basic nature of man to give love. From within the depths of his being this is his eternal motivation. You might ask how such a statement could be accepted as true in the light of such sordid and tragic conditions the world over, from the international down to the individual level, and in the light also of the thick, heavy band of destructive negation which surrounds the earth and its environs like a pall of darkness.

Nevertheless, being an integral part of Infinite Love, man cannot permanently change himself into something unlike that which gave him an individualized identity. Our present man, and our present so-called civilization, have been merely temporarily caught in the slimy backwaters of greed and hate and selfishness and lust for power. But that the basic nature of man, to give love, will ultimately triumph is certain.

Just as the drop of sea water is not the ocean but has the attributes of the ocean, you have the attributes of omniscience and omnipotence. Your nature, therefore, is that of divinity. Practicing the very consciousness of that divinity will pave the way for a much more pleasant transition when the time finally comes for it. Instead of its being the major tragedy it has unfortunately become, transition, except for the inevitable regret at the parting with loved ones, can be an altogether pleasant experience. The unpleasantness, the aura of tragedy with which it is presently enshrouded, can and should be dispersed.

Merely a pleasant transition, or a not-unpleasant one, should not, of course, be your goal, but it will be the inevitable result of that spiritually enlightened consciousness which is born of your living according to the true nature of your being. As this consciousness is continually raised, it opens new vistas of attainment.

It is well that you know some of the aspects of what life is like on the other side. But it is not well that you dwell on it, and become so engrossed in it that you find yourself attempting to live your life over there rather than your life here and now. You are a spiritual being, to be sure, but you are presently in physical life, and your God qualities must express through that physical life, from which it will be necessary, at some time in the future, that you make your exit via the door of transition. And as you assess the profit and loss of dying, do not overlook the fact that your individual balance sheet is being prepared now, by the things which you hold in your consciousness, by the degree to which you are expressing that which you originally came to express, by the degree of your Christ consciousness.

In the expression of your God qualities perhaps you have wished you could "demonstrate" this or that. Many individuals believe that their spiritual advancement is measured in terms of their ability to demonstrate something which may be nothing more than a simple psychic faculty. There are also many people who feel that their spiritual

progress depends upon their having special experiences from time to time which they interpret as being spiritual-as an example, out-of-the-body experiences. There are those who would have you believe that if you cannot demonstrate this or that, then you are being left behind in the spiritual march forward. Many are so spiritually naive that they feel they are highly advanced because they have psychic experiences from time to time. And others wish they could have them.

A given individual may be a highly developed psychic and yet need a very great deal of spiritual instruction and orientation and adjustment and "straightening out" when he gets to the other side.

Do not make this mistaken assumption. You do not need special experiences of any kind. You are living in a physical world, in a physical body, and as long as you continue to do so, the experiences related to this type of life are all that are spiritually essential. Do not allow yourself to become spiritually discontent if you do not have experiences related more to the other side than to this side. Other things will come at their own proper time. Strive constantly to express the Christhood, the flame of which flickers imperishably within the inner recesses of your being. This is the greatest possible spiritual "demonstration" you can make or experience. The manner of your day-to-day living holds the key to the most solid spiritual foundation you can build. That is all you need to do; it is all you should attempt to do; and in terms of your true spiritual status as well as your spiritual future, it is all you can do.

THE END

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