

Tests in the Quest

IN THE INTELLECTUAL SPHERE of the Western world today there is a great unrest. Many “run to and fro” in search of a something that they find easier to grope for than to define. They are attracted to and they dabble in every new cult that appears on the mutable religious firmament, and carefully noting its exterior, they give passing attention to any novel precept or explanation, and too often the latter is little better than an apology, and then journey onward along their aimless path, just as the capricious butterfly visits every bright-hued flower and tastes of its pollen.

At first their activity is largely unconscious, as they seek to simply satisfy curiosity, but after a time, having observed certain discrepancies and anomalies in the claims and elucidations of the various sects, they begin to feel puzzled, uncertain, and dissatisfied, and, attaining to the first degree of consciousness in their search, they utter the historic cry of Pilate, who, when in a like position, asked “What is Truth?”

Thus for the first time these people realize that their transit from one set of opinions to another has a definite object, and though its nature will appear very nebulous at first, yet as disappointment after disappointment is sustained this object will gradually loom up from the background, growing clear-cut and imposing and eventually compel the attention of the seeker.

This dissatisfaction and questioning is the outward sign of the first definite gropings for the path, and if the traveller is taking the staff of the intellect to feel his way onward, then the doubts, fears, and



Planet Art

Clad in armor or khaki, assisted by the angel of intuition or an Elder Brother, one who aspires to the source of truth must wield the sword of discernment, master the mount of his physical body and desire nature, and look to the light from on high.

puzzlings become the thorns of his Via Dolorosa. He will be intellectually assailed as a diversity of doctrines and practices converge upon him and challenge to be mutually reconciled. Finally, with wearied mind and aching head he may well be led to lift his consciousness from the bewildering diversity up to its Source, the great Unity, and utter with rhythm of heart and head “Lead kindly light, amid the encircling gloom”—the first line of Newman’s immortal poem.

This admission of failure is in reality the

moment of the seeker's greatest success, for he has raised his mind for that brief period into the realms where the desired knowledge rules unalloyed, and by the recognition of his own weakness he lays himself open to the assistance of those Beings who, working from the superphysical planes, stand as representatives of the Good Shepherd, ever ready to assist the more precocious of His flock.

There never was an earnest soul who uttered words of despair at his inability to unwind the seeming tangle wrought by the entwining of the multitudinous threads of appearances, whose words did not resound in the superphysical realms and whose call was not responded to gladly by those laboring for and directing our humanity. And from this time he will receive help and guidance from the unseen, though the sources of this assistance will remain unmanifest. This does not mean, however, that he will be taken by the hand and led up to the fountainhead, and after bathing his eyes and gazing upon the former enigma all that before was inexplicable will appear plain. Not in the least.

When giving forth of their virtues, whether it be love, wisdom, or the power to discriminate in action, the Elder Brothers of humanity keep one thing in view, and that is the recipient's prospective ability to serve. The Brothers are in reality the stage managers of this world platform on which the drama of life is being played. Their guiding concern is that the person who receives their attention may become an efficient actor in the ongoing play. Unselfishness alone spells efficiency in the cosmic drama.

For this reason, after his supplication has been made, the seeker is first of all tested upon his persistence and constancy, for without these two qualities he will be useless as a future helper and experience great unhappiness as a result of failure in that direction.

A certain feeling of relief comes over the seeker after he has poured out his heart, for he has been true to himself, he has attended the real confessional that requires no earthly lips to tell him that his shortcomings are forgiven and that an invisible grace will aid him in future attempts to solve his problems. And so he enters again into the intellectual sphere of the everyday world and again

applies himself to the same questions.

He reads, investigates, and listens for "the still small voice" that will speak to him about the great mysteries of the source, purpose, and destiny of life. Although he seems to be nearer a solution in the deepest sense, yet a little further on another deadlock presents itself and the same impenetrable wall formed of every negative quality builds up around him. He knows nothing of the working from behind the scenes and therefore may well be pardoned if, confronted by new obstacles, even his accumulated faith may fail him. As a result, he may either give up the quest, declare that knowledge is impossible and that all is speculation, or simply adopt his time's fashionable opinions.

This is the wise and necessary test set by the Elder Brothers to all seeking definitely for truth. In the Rosicrucian Fellowship, where procedures are based upon occult facts, the Student must remain in the most elementary section, whatever his previous knowledge, for a period of two years before he can have the opportunity of touching the fringe of the deeper teachings. Now those who are governing the Rosicrucian Order itself are also most active along similar lines in the Western world, therefore they apply the same methods, which are the only rational ones from both viewpoints—when properly understood.

The test spoken of may last for varying periods—months or years—and many will fall by the wayside, weary or despondent, or wander into diverting bypaths. Thus those seeking out of idle curiosity or from uncertain motives are gradually eliminated from the quest, and only the dedicated prospective actors remain.

In course of time the third stage begins to develop. The seeker commences to learn the necessity of discrimination. Formerly he was fascinated by each sect offering new explanations and he judged the whole subject by the totality of their presentations. From that experience gained he begins to collate and analyze his information, and as time passes he is able to synthesize the whole and to discern a unity, where before all was diversity and contradiction. Advancing along these lines the mind is eventually focussed inward toward fundamentals and the principles of things, and he puts to

himself a new question—an improvement on the first one—“What is the nature of Truth, of what should it consist, and to what does it relate?”

Upon analysis of this all-important query it must become apparent that religious truth should deal with an explanation of superphysical conditions and their relation to the individual. Three things may be said to describe the rational purpose of religious truth: First, the exposition of super-physical fact; second, the elucidation of super-physical law; and, third, the presentation of counsels and rules of life in harmony with the foregoing conditions.

The purpose of religion since its inception has been to enforce the last named, giving just enough of the two former to still the mind. The whole has been wrapped in allegory and wound up in the story of the founder of the particular religion, in order that it might be the better assimilated by the peoples for whom it was intended.

But religion is in reality a system of morality based upon a science. It is a symbolical expression of cosmic fact. Occultism is the one science of the universe, and the fact that it is the source and inspiration of all religions is proved by their unity in essentials.

This Science may be likened to a natural source, situated in a high mountain, clad in an immaculate robe of snow and never defiled by foot or breath of any creature—the source from which several great rivers rise, all flowing to the same limitless Ocean, and which are the waterways of the people of the earth. The seeker has now reached the point where this source comes within his vision, and great indeed is his privilege.

Occultism deals with the facts of the universe and therefore it is patent that a long path of patient persistence is necessary before the aspirant can discern even the outline.

With the first glimpses of the the snow-capped mountain the traveller from afar may well stand and give thanks from the bottom of his heart, for he will now be able to build the temple of his worship upon the rock of fact, in place of the shifting sands of belief, and no storm shall ever demolish the structure or wash it away. For the resulting conviction reaches the inner planes of being, there to be registered, and he thus acquires man’s bless-



Johannes Fischknecht

Peak in the Annapurna range in the Himalayas

ing and joy, “A house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

In retrospect he sees the path he has followed—from unconscious acceptance to the first dawn of conscious intellectual uneasiness, the precursor of a long period of acute suffering. He notes the gradual relinquishment of the exoteric presentation for the discernment of the inner substance of the various teachings, and he sees his initial steps upward in the first dawn of the perception of the inherent nature of truth. The doubts, fears, and weariness that had beset him during the darkest stages of the path loom up before his eyes as by-gone fantasies out of which he has extracted the “pearl of great price,” and the conscious realization of the possession of the latter transforms his joy into the will to attain, and a determination to use his knowledge—which as a power is a panacea for all ill—to assuage the pain and dispel the ignorance of his fellows. □

—B. Rogers