

Athanasia, the Cornerstone of Religion



A GAIN we are about to witness one of the alternating acts in the great Cosmic drama involving an annual metamorphosis of the earth.* The southern Sun is hastening toward his eastern node, removing the snowy blanket under which Mother Earth has been sleeping, and wakening her to activities of a new year that she may again bring forth food for the sustenance of her children. Cheered by the invigorating rays of the returning Sun, the little birds are singing their love-songs while building the nests for their coming brood. The beasts are mating and the millions of seeds in the ground instinct with the cosmic Christ-life which came down from heaven are bursting that that life may be liberated and returned again to the Father who gave it. Hence they produce not *the living bread* but the bread whereof men live and men die, for though this earthly food is capable of sustaining the body in which the real man sojourns for a time, the divine Life which alone could vitalize it forever has soared to higher spheres since its resurrection at Easter.

An unwarranted stress has been and is being laid upon the mystic death of Jesus in the Gospel story, which is an error from the esoteric point of view. The resurrectional event seems to fade into insignificance in comparison with the death on the cross, and even at Easter the sermons do not usually emphasize the paramount importance of the resurrection. But in the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians we find the doctrine laid down unerringly concerning the relative importance of the

death and the resurrection of Christ as the first-fruits and ourselves as Christs-in-the-making until His kingdom shall have come. There Paul shows with his usual logic that unless *the seed* dies it cannot bring forth, but though it is necessary in plant-life that the seed should die in order to bring forth a new plant, we regard its death as only an insignificant incident to be forgotten in comparison with the all-important fact that the plant flowers and brings forth seed for a new year. Following the analogy, it was necessary when the Christ-Spirit entered Jesus at the time of the baptism that Jesus, the personality, should die in order that the Christ-Life might be liberated and resurrected in due time and from the seed-body of the dead Jesus there might grow millions of other bodies, potential vehicles for the Christ-Spirit, ready to follow in His steps to make the world a better place and pave the way for the perfect men.

But we know that there are no sudden processes in nature. When the butterfly breaks its cocoon and soars into the empyrean, the seemingly sudden and miraculous development proves upon investigation to be the outcome of a comparatively slow growth and development which has transformed the grub into a winged creature. The law of analogy, which is the master-key to all mysteries, shows us an orderly process of unfoldment also in the human being and even in the earth upon which we live. There are too many lessons to be learned in life's school and it has therefore been wisely ordered by the divine Hierarchs who have charge of our development that by a series of existences in gradually improving earthy bodies we may learn life's lessons and evolve toward the stature of a

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perfect being. Thus, as the Christ-Life enters the earth in annual cycles to give it the vitality necessary to the sustenance of the flora and fauna and is raised up again to the right hand of the Father at Easter, so also the Ego takes its cyclic dips into the body, and that which we call death is only as the seed that lies in the ground. The life has ascended up to the Father taking with it the aroma of soul-growth and from the dead seed of the body arises the seed-atom which will furnish a new vehicle for the next pilgrimage of the spirit into matter. The spirit which was never born can never die and even the body in the very act of dying perpetuates itself through the seed-atom by which it lives anew.

Man was destined to conquer the physical world. This was necessary in order to teach him to think aright, for concrete conditions reveal to us and show us more plainly than could be done in any other way when we have made a mistake in our calculations. But in order that man might apply himself to learn these lessons with his whole heart the spiritual verities were hidden from him by unrestricted indulgence of the lower nature. Wine, women, and song have taken the place of spiritual pleasures, until many believe that that is all there is. The truth however, was not to be entirely obscured, and though the Light has been deeply veiled in the Christian religion for the purpose stated, it has, nevertheless, been there all the time. We are beginning to conquer the demon drink and the virtue of chastity is beginning to be more and more recognized every day. Therefore the light shines more clearly and we perceive it in such places as that fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, which all ought to read, particularly at this Easter time, substituting, however, the word "soul" for "natural" twice in the 44th verse and leaving out the words "is the Lord" in the 47th. In that chapter Paul champions the doctrine of rebirth: "How say some of you there is no resurrection of the dead? If Christ be not raised from the dead then is your faith vain." And later:

"But some men will say, How are the dead raised up and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die and that which thou sowest thou sowest not that body which shall be but a bare seed [atom] but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him and for every seed a body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of beasts, another

of birds, and another of fishes. There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial (earthly bodies as well as spiritual bodies), the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the Sun and another glory of the Moon and another glory of the stars, for each star differeth from the others in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead: it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised to power; it is sown a soul-body, it is raised a spiritual body. So it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual but that which is soul; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is from heaven. Now this I say brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

When the Sun is in the southern signs during the winter months and the northern part of the earth is asleep, wrapped in its death-like shroud of snow, the powers of death and darkness seem to be supreme, but when the Sun of the new year reaches the equator and crosses into the northern signs, giving its light and strength for the present preservation of humanity in this hemisphere, death is vanquished. Similarly also the aspirant to the higher life can only win victory over death by giving his life in self-sacrifice for others. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, it must be offered up on the altar of self-sacrifice. Only then comes the liberation from the cross with the glorious cry uttered first by Christ, *Consummatum est*—it has been accomplished. As he soars out into subtler spheres, he continues there the work of soul growth that was commenced in his earthly body. Thus in every realm of nature, from the crystal to the Christ, the principle of re-birth is used by the divine Hierarchies for the upliftment of all that lives, the least to the greatest, and it is therefore the cornerstone of all religion. □