

The Challenge of Life

WHenever a human Spirit is born here on Earth in a physical body, it has deliberately placed itself in a situation where dissatisfaction and discontent are the rule. If we study our lives from day to day, we find that there is always some problem in the offing, something that requires consideration, decision, and action.

The person who is swayed entirely by his emotions, no matter how advantageously he may be situated, will always be able to find something to be worried or concerned about. It is the ability to realize that life in the physical body presents a continuous challenge, and the ability to recognize and meet these challenges with poise and equanimity, which constitutes a successful incarnation. The person who is contented is standing still and making little progress toward attaining wisdom and understanding.

The Spirit at the time of physical rebirth enters life with a karmic debt from past lives that must be met, and as far as possible the Ego must also inaugurate something new to insure its progress and advancement. The difficulties, sorrows, and suffering we must endure challenge us on every hand. In meeting the problems of life an awareness of the spiritual value of the struggle will make for joy and satisfaction as each one is met and overcome. The search for peace and joy is a spur that brings about action and experience, which develops wisdom.

When a Spirit is reborn into a physical body, it must first become aware of itself, aware of itself as an Ego—a self-conscious Ego. This is usually accomplished by the seventh year. Then it is necessary to acquire an education, to equip itself to meet and deal with the exigencies of life,

whatever they may be. Later, as a youth, it faces the challenges of the emotional nature and must achieve a measure of control over it. If in a male physical body, it must prepare itself for the role of fatherhood and find a means of livelihood to provide for itself and a family. If in a female body, it must prepare itself for motherhood and learn to care for a family. Our educational system does not always adequately prepare for these needs, which constitute the basic challenges that must be met by the majority of human beings.

It would seem that much of the difficulty with young people today is due to the fact that many parents attempt to shield their children from the challenges of life, rather than teach them how to meet and cope with their daily experiences. How often we have heard parents say: "I don't want my children to have to struggle as I did." To take the struggle out of life is to remove the absolutely necessary opportunities for experience, which are the only means we have of gaining the wisdom that nourishes the Spirit. Rearing a family and seeing that children are equipped emotionally and mentally to live productive lives is of inestimable value. And yet, those who must struggle for an education without help or encouragement from anyone are doubly blest, for out of such an endeavor great spiritual power may be developed. This applies even more so to those who must overcome tremendous handicaps and obstacles in order to achieve their goal.

There is a tendency on the part of some persons to take on challenges that are not rightfully theirs, which is one way of "borrowing trouble." It is very difficult at times to remain aloof and allow dear friends and loved ones to meet the problems in their lives in their own way. This often presents a special challenge for the strong soul, who feels he

could handle an unfortunate situation better than the person who is faced with it. One must guard against assuming the karma of another, for this is an injury to both parties.

If we would teach our children to meet the problems of life head on with the zest that the realization of their value might imbue, we would have done much to overcome the tendency of many young people to seek experience in the use of drugs, crime, and emotional excesses to which they so often resort as a means of escape from the legitimate challenges their life presents. Some young people do accept life's problems early in life, and with apparent relish, as we note in those who find something constructive to do with their time, whether as a hobby or a real job. So often we see that it is those who have severe handicaps to overcome who accomplish the most with their lives. Accepting the challenge of their condition with calmness and determination gives added power to all their faculties, and their success is often amazing. Such a Spirit is Helen Keller, who overcame to a considerable degree an incredible handicap, and there-

by made an important contribution to humanity. Great credit must also go to her teacher, Anne Sullivan, who devoted a life of loving service to her unusual pupil.

We have always with us the challenge of adaptability. In *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception* we are told that

In the word adaptability we have the great secret of advancement or retardation. All progress depends on whether an evolving being is flexible, adaptable, and pliable, so as to be able to accommodate itself to new conditions or

whether it is crystallized, set, and incapable of alteration. Adaptability is the quality that makes for progress, whether an entity is at a high or a low state of evolution. Lack of it is the cause of retardation of the Spirit and retrogression of the form. This applies to the past, present, and future; the division of the qualified and the unqualified thus being made with the exact and impersonal justice of the Law of Consequence.



If life be not fraught with challenge, what sense is to be made of Christ's words: "Unless a grain of wheat fall to the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it will bringeth forth much fruit"? As grains of God, we die to our separateness and finiteness and grow through Christ into the image and likeness of our Creator.

all? A whole lifetime, yes, many lifetimes, may be spent in this fascinating quest. This search will eventually bring the seeker to the spiritual Path. Some may find a philosophy that suits their needs and will spend years of study and service preparing themselves for the higher life.

Others may feel that the proper method is to work on the physical body through breathing exercises, diet, etc. Very often they became lost in these physical activities. The breathing exercises may bring improved health or insanity, according to the system used and the nature of the student. Likewise in diet many became so interested in

If a person finds himself in uncongenial work or surroundings, this faculty of adaptability is of great value. Of course such a person must always be on the lookout for an opportunity to make a change and be willing to grasp it when it appears. Adaptability must also apply to religions and philosophies. Unless they expand and grow along with humanity, they can no longer fill their needs. The willingness to embrace new concepts and incorporate new ideas is absolutely necessary if a religion is to avoid crystallization and retrogression.

Then there is the challenge of finding a reason for life here on Earth. Why are we here? What is the purpose of it

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what is to be taken into the body that they turn into food faddists and cranks. This, too, may improve or ruin the health according to the practices followed, but neither diet nor breathing exercises will bring the wisdom and understanding required for spiritual development. Others run about from one philosophy to another, sampling this and trying that, in the vain belief that their promiscuous activities will lead to spiritual growth. The sincere and serious student, who engages in honest self-analysis and personal discipline, will be led to the studies and contacts that are best for him.

The progress of the occult student may be judged by his behavior in his daily contacts, his general attitude toward his fellowmen. Even if he is rendering significant service in important ways, it is to some extent nullified and set at naught if egotism, malice, selfishness, and lack of consideration for others reveal an obvious failure to overcome the lower self. Ideals have not really been embraced and accepted until we are willing and able to apply them in our daily contacts and bring them into manifestation in our personal lives.

There is an old saying: "What you are speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you say." No matter what beautiful words may flow from the lips of an individual, his true nature is revealed in his behavior toward his fellowman. To profess without practice makes the life a meaningless farce. Always we have with us the challenges of refusing to return in kind malicious gossip, injustice, and persecution, and to deal with those who use unworthy methods to gain their own ends.

The proper development and use of our talents represents another challenge—to find a means of self-expression that can be of genuine service to humanity and to use it with humility and selflessness. All of us have to face old age and the challenge of keeping life active and constructive instead of passive and useless.

Many on the spiritual path seek and yearn for Initiation with great eagerness, not realizing that this very eagerness may be the obstacle between them and their goal, since it is apt to be a form of selfishness and ambition which has been merely transferred to a higher plane. Initiation is more likely to be achieved by someone who has forgotten all

INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come, Thou Holy Spirit, come,
And from Thy celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine.

Come, Thou Father of the poor,
Come, Thou source of all our store,
Come, within our bosoms shine.

Thou of comforters the best,
Thou the soul's delightful guest,
Sweet refreshment here below.

In our labor rest most sweet,
Pleasant coolness in the heat,
Solace in the midst of woe.

O most blessed Light divine,
Shine within these hearts of Thine,
And our inmost being fill.

Where Thou art not, man hath nought,
Nothing good in deed or thought,
Nothing free from taint of ill.

Heal our wounds, our strength renew,
On our dryness pour Thy dew,
Wash the stains of guilt away.

Bend the stubborn heart and will,
Melt the frozen, warm the chill,
Guide the steps that go astray.

On Thy faithful who adore,
And confess Thee evermore,
In Thy sevenfold gifts descend.

Give them virtue's sure reward,
Give them Thy salvation, Lord.
Give them joys that never end.
Amen. Alleluia.

about his own desires in selfless service to others.

SERVICE is the battle-cry of the Rosicrucian Fellowship student. Some meet this challenge by rushing around, being ever so helpful, and getting very much in their own way. May the student learn to polarize himself with spirit so that he is a powerhouse of radiating love, a constant receiving station of the LIGHT which needs only "to be" in order to serve humanity. □

—Edith Wilkinson