

The SEARCHLIGHT -

Association for Research and Enlightenment, Incorporated
VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

Vol. IV

No. 3

UNDERSTANDING SELF The Key to Spiritual Growth By Lydia J. Schrader Gray

On the ancient Temple of Apollo, on Mt. Parnassus, is the inscription: KNOW THYSELF.

There is an old Hindu legend which says:

Man once became proud and haughty in the knowledge of his own divinity, and so the gods for punishment decided to take away this knowledge and conceal it from him. But they could not agree where to hide it. They saw that man was so cunning he would discover any hiding place, and so strong and daring that he would seek it anywhere, scaling the highest mountain or plumbing the deepest sea. Then Brahma said, "Give it to me, and I will hide it where man will never think to look for it." So Brahma hid man's divinity within man himself; and, in fact, it is there that man never thinks of looking but searches restlessly instead, all over the earth.

In studying the hundreds of life-readings and physical readings given by Edgar Cayce we are immediately impressed with the emphasis on this age-old maxim "Know Thyself." Every personal reading given by Edgar Cayce directed the seeker to "Go within self," to "understand self."

It is true that the majority of people who came seeking help were suffering physically. The information dealt directly with the physical ailment,

and for thousands it proved to be a source of help. The readings, however, did much more than this; they also related these ailments to the whole purpose of life, and urged each individual to think in terms of the unity of the body, mind and soul. For they are one - and inter-penetrate and react, one upon the other.

An individual asked, "How may I best adjust myself that I may feel more in step with the patterns of life?"

The answer given was, *By studying or analysing self in relation to what is chosen as your ideal. Remember, all you may know of God is within your own self. (No. 4035)*

In studying interpretations of spiritual laws through the readings, the first Study Group working with Edgar Cayce received as its second discourse, or lesson for study, "Know Thyself."

This discourse will be found in the second chapter of the book, 'A Search for God.' It deals with the physical, the mental and the spiritual bodies. Let me quote from a paragraph on 'The Physical Body:'

As entities, or souls, we are miniature copies of the universe, possessing physical, mental and spiritual bodies. These bodies are so closely associated and related, that the vibrations of one affect the other two. Our mental especially partakes of the

other two; in the physical as the conscious mind, and in the spiritual as the superconscious mind. Our bodies are temples of the living God. Our physical bodies are composite units of the Creative Force, manifesting in the material world.

Until we are better acquainted with ourselves, we are barriers in the way of our development.

Just exactly what is a physical body? What relationship does it have to the real you?

In the book, *Man the Unknown*, by Alexis Carrel, the chapter on "Body and Physiological Activities" will give you a much greater appreciation of the magnificence and complexity of your physical body. In his opening chapter, Carrel states our problem concisely in these words:

"We must realise clearly that the science of man is the most difficult of all sciences. Our ignorance of ourselves is of a peculiar nature. It does not arise from difficulty in procuring the necessary information from its inaccuracy, or its scarcity; on the contrary, it is due to the extreme abundance and confusion of data accumulated about itself by humanity down through the ages."

The readings stress the point that the body is the result of mental and spiritual activity; thus the body is part of the soul entity - not a trap which has closed about the soul, and from which one seeks escape!

Some philosophies of the east, which have influenced our own religious teachings, emphasise the denial of physical urges, and even self-torture, to obtain so-called freedom from matter. This point of view is symbolised in the severity of the monastery cells and the bed of nails of the Indian fakirs. At the other extreme, gratification of the senses

of the physical body can lead only to disillusionment.

We should all realise that we are here on this physical plane for soul growth—and that by our every act, thought and deed we are gaining or losing in the spiritualising of every cell in our body.

We should know that each cell in the physical organism has consciousness. It is our duty here on the earth plane, by raising our own consciousness, to so spiritualise each cell that we may grow toward the Christ-consciousness which was in Jesus. "He is the Way." His resurrection was the final step in transforming the physical organism to a state of spiritual consciousness. He himself said, "I and the Father are One." This is the spiritual goal of each and every one of us.

Oneness of All Force

Recognition of the physical body as part of the soul is essential to a complete awareness of what is meant by the "Oneness of All Force"

The Association for Research and Enlightenment has published a paper entitled "The Oneness of All Force." In it we find this statement:

Nothing is more important to mankind than the Oneness of everything. One-One-One. Oneness of God, oneness of man's relationship, oneness of purpose, oneness of every effort - oneness, oneness, oneness! Though seemingly this is a vague concept, the Oneness of Force is a basic, fundamental truth. As man in his everyday life applies his understanding of this truth, there results a more complete expression of the real self. Think about these points and examine them further:

1. Your physical body is part of the soul - a result of your mental and spiritual activity. You are

responsible for your body - you are building it day by day, not only by what you add to it in food, drink and air, but by what you think and do. The Spiritual is the life. The Mental is the builder. The Physical is the result!

2. The ultimate goal, the "Christ consciousness is the spiritualisation of every cell in the physical body." The implications here are tremendous and challenging!

Think this through - and you will arrive at logical conclusions which will relate you to a Cosmic Plan. This approach to the physical body will raise questions in your minds regarding the original purpose of physical life in the earth plane.

We recommend for your reading the Philosophy chapter in *There Is A River*, by Thomas Sugrue, and the Association pamphlet "The Coming of Man." These may enlighten and clarify your doubts and questionings. In many ways man has attempted to glorify the physical body-such systems have led us far astray. Let us make the body the temple of the Living God.

The Threefold Nature of Man

Now, let us consider the mental body. The conventional definition of - mind divides it into conscious and subconscious. In metaphysical terms there is also the super-conscious or soul-mind, related to the Cosmic Mind. You and I must not become confused by these divisions, for they are aspects of the One Force.

Our knowledge of the objective world, or our physical consciousness, depends upon our use of the five senses. When we allow the excessive development of the senses to block all understanding and knowledge of the subjective world, we become material-

minded. We should know that our senses are limited; we should also know that gratification of the senses dulls them. Highly seasoned food will destroy our taste for other foods. Exclusive listening to popular music may prevent appreciation of more beautiful compositions. The Readings tell us this;

The subconscious mind is an attribute of the soul. It is the unconscious mind of the physical body which controls the natural functions of the body such as the circulation of the blood, digestion, breathing, etc. It is the storehouse of stimuli cast aside or unrecorded by the conscious mind.

As it is related to the conscious through its connection and control of the body, so it is related to the super-conscious, the mind of the soul; and acts as a channel through which impulses come to the physical body from the soul-mind.

The super-conscious partakes of the universal, in that it may be said to hold a higher concept of God's law and their application. It is the mind which travels with the Soul in its journeys through many states of awareness in realms beyond the physical.

We are aware of dreams, visions, principles, or longings, that transcend the world of the senses, which seem to relate us to a higher life. The phase of mind which is attuned to the infinite or cosmic mind may be called the super-conscious. Remember that these divisions are for convenience only. "Mind is all one." We name or divide it into conscious, subconscious, super-conscious, as we are aware of various phases of its expression. Mind is the Builder.

The readings have clarified the super-conscious Thus: *The super-conscious mind is not of the earth forces at all. It is only awakened with the*

spiritual indwelling, and is acquired individually Super-consciousness is the consciousness between soul and spirit. (No. 900-91)

Immediately the question arises as to the relationship between mind and will. On this subject. the readings take an interesting Stand:

Mind is the active principle which governs man; it is in direct opposition to will. Will is the factor in the mind of man which must be exercised. (No. .97-M)

There is set before you life and death, good and evil. Choose! As to what, which, where and how you will choose, that is within your own consciousness. Know that the Father has made you a free-willed individual. Choose, yourself, whom you will serve. (No. 531-MS)

So again I repeat: Mind is the builder. As we think, so we become. For 40 years the readings have reiterated this. Mind controls the body. Thought takes form as it moulds matter. Mind is the creative power of the universe. We use this power of mind and will daily. We have access through it to the cosmic mind, the mind of God, of which each of us is a part.

Life is. Each soul is an off- spring of the Creative Forces, called God, and is by application the result of how it has manifested that prerogative of will. (No. 951-L-1)

Destiny is what a soul does with its will, in relationship to the Creative Forces. (No. 3.91-MS-1)

Most of us must undertake a complete mental housecleaning, as we set out to understand ourselves. Thoughts of hate, fear, greed, power and anger block the natural creative functions of the mind. The readings say:

Each and every entity should know that every thought, act and deed

are the materials out of which they are building their very being. The sojourns in various spheres are but the results of their own desires. Then feed upon the fruits of the spirit: love, tolerance, patience, hope, charity, long-suffering and brotherly love. (No. 311-MS-1)

You will find Carrel's chapter in *Man the Unknown* on mental activities stimulating. It is encouraging to see a scientist recognise these functions of the mind, moving step by step toward a spiritual rather than a material result. "Colitis and the accompanying infections of the kidneys and of the bladder are the remote results of mental and moral unbalance. Such diseases are almost unknown in social groups where life is not complex."

In William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, some of the exalted states of consciousness of great religious students are described. Such experiences lead us to consider the third part of the mind which we have called the super-conscious - the mind of the soul. In meditation and prayer this phase of mind functions, bringing us to a better awareness of our relationship with the divine power of the universe. This guidance is part of our heritage, free to each seeker. "Seek and ye shall find." But to find God we must believe that He is and that we are an integral part of Him. We must recognise the spiritual quality of self, the existence of the soul, of which the body is a part, of which mind is an attribute.

Consider this question from our pamphlet, "The Oneness of All Force": "It is well to remember that, through self, man will understand his relationship to his Maker."

The readings define Spirit thus; *The spirit is the companion of an entity's soul, the spark of the Creator. (254-18)*. And *The soul is the body of*

the spiritual force manifested in the individual. (No. 900-19).

We have taken time to examine this threefold nature of man, because without such principles as a basis we can become hopelessly confused in attempting to unravel the intricate threads of our own personality. Begin, then, by thinking of yourself as a soul, but hold to the oneness of body as an expression and mind as an attribute of self.

Continuity of Life

Many of you will say that your greatest troubles lie in the physical body, in the emotions. Life seems to be a complex, swiftly changing pattern. This is true, but at this point let us consider the idea of rebirth - *the continuity of life*. The continuity of life—and a plan of spiritual growth is indicated in every one of the 2,500 life readings given by Edgar Cayce.

"Candid Camera of the Cosmos," an article by Gina Cerminara, will acquaint you more fully with the laws of evolutionary growth and karma. Any understanding of self should include the possibility of interpreting self in the light of many sojourns, not just one experience, here. There are many planes of consciousness.

Let us not limit the universe. Yes, perhaps you have worn many coats of your own making! The readings tell us that basic emotional urges come from past lives in the earth plane. Basic mental urges come from experiences of the soul - in planes of consciousness between incarnations. The storehouse of experience is within our own inner consciousness. Hence how reasonable is the admonition given throughout the ages, "Know Thyself. Seek within Self."

We are meeting self. This may be a startlingly new concept, but in the light of the law of cause and effect it has

helped many seeking souls to understand self. *As you sow, so shall you reap* takes on new meaning. Some examples Dr. Cerminara took from individual readings show the law in operation:

Before that, the entity was in the earth when the children of promise passed through the lands forbidden ...except with permission. The name then was Jared. The entity took advantage of a group, hence expect a group to take advantage of you. For what you measure must and will be measured to you again. You must pay every whit of what you measure and this applies in the future as well as in the past.

An interesting example of psychological karma is seen in the case of a young aviation instructor who was suffering from an inferiority complex. In his life reading he learned that self-doubt in the present was due to his activities as an eminent English critic in the past. Having been hypercritical and given to causing hurt or rousing self-doubt, he was born this time into circumstances causing him to be doubtful of himself. (No. 4035-L)

On the positive side of physical karma is the case of the lovely New York model whose extraordinarily beautiful hands bring her into much demand for advertising jewellery, nail polish, etc. Her life reading revealed that in her preceding incarnation in England she had been a recluse in a convent. Her whole life had been spent in menial service performed with her hands. So loving had been the dedication with which she used them, in rough and dirty tasks, that her consecration of spirit had externalised itself this time by unusual beauty of hands. (No. 1286-L)

Some of the most striking cases in the Cayce files are those in which

afflicted individuals are told what has caused their suffering. A crippled girl had commanded that Christians be maimed in the Roman arena. A blind professor had been a member of a barbaric Persian tribe and had seared the eyes of his captives with a hot iron. (Cases No. 275 and No. 1861)

Not all of the readings however have to do with physical disfigurements. Many give explanations for psychological difficulties and problems of marital adjustment. People are often bound together by karmic ties from one lifetime to another. The readings frequently repeat that no major relationship with a fellow man is the result of chance, but is born of mutual need for justice.

One couple found marriage increasingly difficult because of the husband's marked tendency to dominate. It was learned through a life reading that in a previous life they had been associated as father and wayward daughter in Fort Dearborn (now Chicago), where a pattern of dominance and resentment had been set up. The situation had not been met in love and understanding; hence the two were brought together once again in order to dissolve the debts contracted and to redeem the flaws of character that made their friction possible.

With this new understanding both husband and wife were able to regard themselves with detachment and a sense of humour. Problems which previously loomed large were now seen as opportunities upon which to exercise their spiritual muscle. The marriage has become harmonious, with both partners seeking to cooperate in building soul qualities, rather than to compete for ego-satisfactions. (Cases No. 2301 and No. 2175)

These examples show us the

operation of Cosmic Law. The future holds for us exactly what we put into the present. Action inspired by selfish motives will bring us pain. Action that is genuinely selfless and loving will bring us joy and spiritual growth.

A questioning soul asked: "What should the year bring to me?" The answer was: "Depends on what the entity puts into its service to others, and its way of attaining to and keeping faith with itself and its Maker." (Case No. 459·L·2)

So, it is up to each individual. First look to your ideals. From the readings we have these instructions; *In analysing self and the ideals, do not merely carry these in mind, but put them down on paper. Write Physical. Write Mental. Write Spiritual. Put under each the words which describe your spiritual concept of your ideal. Is it Jesus, Buddha, mind, material, or God? Begin with the spiritual, because all that is in mind must first come from a spiritual concept.*

Then under the mental heading write the ideal mental attitude, (arising from spiritual concepts) in relation to self, to home, to friends, to neighbours, to enemies, to things, to conditions.

Next describe the physical or material ideal Thus an individual may analyse himself. Then set about to apply the knowledge you have attained; for you will get new ideas about these ideals. You may change them from time to time as you study them. (Case No. 5091-MS-1)

Remember, Mind is the builder. *Consciously watch self go by.* Too few of us find time to do this. Ask yourself: What are my motives? What are my outstanding faults? You may be sure that each and every one of us has some lesson to learn or fault to overcome - otherwise we wouldn't be here. For the

soul's development is in the earth plane. The spirit entity's development is in the spirit plane.

Apropos of faults-let me quote from two readings:

This entity should take himself in hand. He should realise that the greatest faults he finds in others are only reflections of himself. This is always true, and should be analysed and studied. (No. 5321)

Q. What karma do I have to overcome in order to free myself mentally and spiritually? A. Karma is rather the lack of living according to what you know you should do. As you would be forgiven, so forgive. That is the manner to meet Karma! But learn the lesson - if you would be loved, show yourself friendly; if you would not be persecuted or talked about, then do not talk about others; if you would have forgiveness, then forgive, even as you would be forgiven.

These are not merely theorems or theses for contemplation; they are practical and applicable in the experience, the affairs and the associations of each individual, if they will but be applied in the experience. (Case No. 2271-L.1)

Notice the word *applied* and heed its implications - for "Knowledge not lived becomes sin," as the readings so often gave. It is not what one knows of spirit law that counts, but what one DOES about it!

Why are we here? These few excerpts from individual readings give food for thought:

For each entity in the earth is what it is because of what it has been! And each moment is dependent upon another moment. So a sojourn in the earth, as indicated, is a lesson in the school of life. (Case No. 2823-L-2)

We should also become aware of the law of balance, the law of harmony, the law of vibration, of attraction and, through our will, apply them in our own lives. Let us study self - that we may be channels for the Christ-consciousness to flow through us, as we meet our fellow man. The readings say:

Make prayer and meditation a part of your lives, not exceptions in your in your daily routine. Know the difference between prayer and meditation. Prayer is an appeal to the divine, both within self and without. Meditation is keeping still in the body, in the mind, in the heart, and listening for the voice of God. (Case No. 5368)

There are many streams of truth, all leading to the one river. Judge not the other streams, for they are feeding souls who are on a different plane of consciousness or understanding in the various classrooms of evolutionary growth. But remember:

"The Lord thy God is One. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul; and thy neighbour as thyself." The readings of Edgar Cayce say, with Jesus, that this is the greatest of all commandments. The extent of its application measures our degree of soul growth in this earth plane.

NOTE: This has is a REPRINT of a former monthly publication of the Association for Research and Enlightenment, Inc.