

THE PROCESS OF EVOLUTION

Applied knowledge is the salvation for ignorance. Even the wisest among us have much to learn and no one has, as yet, attained perfection; nor can one attain perfection in one short life. We observe everywhere in Nature that slow, persistent unfoldment makes for higher development of everything. The more we know of the working methods of Nature, the visible symbol of the invisible God, the better able we shall be to take advantage of the opportunities it offers for growth and power -- for emancipation from bondage, and the elevation to self-mastery. This process is Evolution.

At the beginning of his evolution man consisted only of Spirit and body; he was soulless. But since then each life lived on Earth in the great school of experience has made him more and more soulful according to the use he has made of the opportunities and the lessons he has learned from them. This is shown in the different gradations between the savage and the saint, which we see all around us. All races are products of evolution, the only object of which is final perfection. The highest expression in one life becomes the lowest expression in the next life, and thus we gradually climb the ladder of evolution toward Divinity. Humanity as a whole is slowly progressing upon this path and thus slowly attaining higher states of consciousness.

Periodicity

One of the chief characteristics of evolution lies in the fact that it manifests in alternating periods of activity and rest. The busy summer is followed by the rest and inactivity of winter, and each season is a little farther progressed along the pathway of time. The busy day alternates with the quiet of night. The ebb of the ocean is succeeded by the flood-tide.

Thus, as all other things move in cycles, the life that expresses itself here upon Earth for a few years is not to be thought of as ended when death comes. The birth of this body is infinitely far from our ending. Our Spirits are immortal and the physical bodies are the instruments which we use during this Earth life to aid in our evolution. We may rest assured that in whatever station of life we are placed, monarch or beggar, rich or poor, it contains the lessons and experiences necessary at the moment for our evolution and gives us the best possible advantage for our development. As surely as the Sun rises in the morning after having set at night, will the life that was ended by the death of one body be taken up again in a new vehicle and in a different environment.

Evolution is the history of the progression of the spirit in time. Everywhere in Heaven and on Earth all things are going onward -- upward, forever, and as we see about us the varied phenomena in the universe, we realize that the path of evolution is a spiral. Each loop of the spiral is a cycle. Each cycle merges into the next and as the loops of the spiral are continuous, each cycle is the improved product of those preceding it, and the creator of those more developed states which are to come.

The Spiral Path

But the path of evolution is a spiral when we regard it from the physical side only. It is a lemniscate or figure eight when viewed in both its physical and spiritual phases. The two circles of the lemniscate converging to a central point symbolize the immortal Spirit, the evolving Ego. One of the circles signifies its life in the physical world from birth to death. During this span of time it sows seeds by every act and should reap a certain amount of experience, which it will do if lessons are extracted from its opportunities; and at the end of this life the Ego will find itself at the door of death laden with the richest fruits of life.

The other circle of the lemniscate symbolizes the sojourn of the Ego in the invisible worlds which it traverses during the period from death to birth. At the time when the Ego arrives at the central point in the lemniscate which divides the physical from the spiritual worlds, it has with it a collection of faculties or talents acquired in all its previous lives which it may put to use or bury during the next life experience as it sees fit; but upon the use it makes of its acquired faculties depends the amount of soul-growth it garners in its next life. We have already lived through a mineral, a plant, and an animal-like existence before becoming human, and beyond us lie still further evolutions where we shall approach the Divine more and more.

Advancing Through Sacrifice

Man advances by sacrifice alone. Few realize that when we rise in the scale of evolution, we do so by trampling upon the bodies of our weaker brothers. Consciously or unconsciously we crush them and use them in attaining our own ends. This fact holds good concerning all the Kingdoms in Nature. When a life wave has been brought down to the lowest point of involution and encrusted in mineral form, it is immediately seized upon by another slightly higher life wave which takes the disintegrating mineral crystal, adapts it to its own needs as crystalloid, and assimilates it as part of a plant form.

Foot Washing

In the Christian Mystic initiation when the Christ washed the feet of His disciples on the night of the Last Supper, the explanation is given that unless the minerals decomposed and were offered as embodiments for the plant kingdom, we should have no vegetation; also if the plant food did not furnish sustenance for the animals, the beings of the animal kingdom could not find expression, and so on -- the higher is always feeding on the lower, and as the Master washed the feet of His disciples, He symbolically performed for them that menial service in recognition of the fact that they had served Him as stepping-stones to something higher.

The same principle holds good in all spiritual evolution, for if there were no pupils standing on the lower round of the ladder of knowledge and requiring instructions, there would be no need for a Teacher. But here there is one all important difference. The Teacher grows by giving to his pupils and serving them, as everybody, no matter what station in life, grows by service. From the shoulders of the pupils the teacher steps to a higher rung of the ladder of knowledge, and thereby owes them a debt of gratitude which is symbolically acknowledged and liquidated by the foot-washing, an act of humble service to those who have served Him.

Progress or Regress

Under the beneficent guidance of the Great Intelligences, we are constantly progressing from life to life under conditions exactly suited to each individual until in time we shall attain to a higher evolution and become supermen. The occultist believes the purpose of evolution to be the development of man from a static to a dynamic God -- a creator. In order that he may become an independent, original Creator, it is necessary that his training should include sufficient latitude for the exercise of the individual originality which distinguishes creation from imitation. So long as certain features of the old form meet with requirements of progression they are retained, but at each rebirth the evolving life adds such original improvements as are necessary for its future expression. Stragglers have been left along the way who failed to reach the necessary standard to keep abreast of the crest-wave of evolution. In the progress of evolution there is no halting place. Progress or retrogression is the Law, and the form that is not capable of further improvement must degenerate.

The evolutionary impulse works to achieve ultimate perfection for all. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the exalted Intelligences in charge of our evolution use every means available to bring through in safety as many as possible of the entities under their charge. Every vibration of the universe is life and all life has sprung from the one God. Hence, we are all one, yet there are some who are constantly straggling behind.

During this present stage of individualism, which is the climax of our illusionary separateness, all mankind needs extra help, but for the stragglers some additional, special aid must be provided. To give that special aid was the mission of Christ. He said He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He opened the way of Initiation for all who are willing to seek it.

Soul Growth

Evolution depends upon soul growth, the transmutation of the bodies into soul, which must be accomplished by the individual efforts of the Spirit in man, the Ego, and at the end of evolution it will possess soul-power as the fruitage of its pilgrimage through matter. It will be a Creative Intelligence.

If we fill our appointed niche to the best of our ability throughout our whole life we shall be certain of advancement in a future age. We shall see more clearly through the veil of egoism when we willingly live the life in which we have been placed, for the Recording Angels make no mistakes. They have put us in that place where we have been given the lessons needed to prepare us for a greater sphere of usefulness.

If we have within ourselves sufficient love of all things, we can do no harm, because that love would stay our hand at any action, our mind at any thought which might hurt another. As yet we have not reached that advanced stage of consciousness. If we had, there would be no need for our existence here, but all of us are seeking and advancing toward that state of glorious perfection. It is surprising how rapidly an individual may advance along these lines if he is truly serious in his effort, trusting not in his poor personality alone, but having implicit faith that by the example and teachings of Christ he may be enabled to unite himself with his Divinity within.

Evolution depends upon the dissolution of the bodies and the alchemical amalgamation of the soul with the Spirit. The soul is the quintessence, the power or force of the body, and when a body has been brought to perfection through the various stages, the soul is fully extricated therefrom and is absorbed by one of the three aspects of the Spirit which generated the body in the first place.

The Goal of Perfection

The Conscious soul will be absorbed by the Divine Spirit in the seventh Revolution of the Jupiter Period.

The Intellectual soul will be absorbed by the life spirit in the sixth Revolution of the Venus Period.

The Emotional soul will be absorbed by the human spirit in the fifth Revolution of the Vulcan Period.

While developing this universal love within ourselves we learn to realize more and more that every human being is a son of the Creator and that in due time we will advance to perfection, just as we all hope to do. However base a man or creature may appear, we must remember that there is a Divine spark within which will slowly but surely grow until the glory of the Creator illuminates that being.

The Divine Hierarchies who have guided humanity upon the path of evolution from the beginning of our career are still active and working with us from their worlds, and with their help we shall eventually be able to accomplish the elevation of humanity as a whole and attain to an individual realization of glory and immortality. Having this great hope within ourselves, this great mission in the world, let us work as never before to make ourselves better men and women so that by our example we may waken in others a desire to lead a life that brings liberation.