

SILVER BIRCH
ANTHOLOGY

WISDOM FROM
THE WORLD BEYOND

Edited by WILLIAM NAYLOR

TO SILVER BIRCH

Though we have never met on earthly plane
He is try friend, my counsellor and guide,
My strength and comfort in the days of pain,
The unseen presence constant by my side -
He understands life's problems and its needs,
(By facing trials does noble status grow!)
He points the way of conduct in all deeds,
Knowing we do but reap the seeds we sow -
In words of simple wisdom he will say
That service is the Spirit's only coin,
The paths of love and kindness lead the way
To the true Source wherein all roads conjoin.

SYLVIA BARBANELL.

INTRODUCTION

Of all those great and famous discarnate beings who have mastered the uncertain art of continuous spirit communication none has been so widely loved and justly honoured as Silver Birch, the unfailingly wise and eloquent yet ever humble spirit guide of Hannen Swaffer's home circle.

It is the purpose of this anthology to select, from the vast recorded store of his memorable utterances, a few of those views, declarations and pronouncements that have permanent significance for a mankind still painfully evolving to a greater realisation of spiritual realities.

I had originally intended taking the six Silver Birch books and selecting passages on a variety of subjects. A kind of Bedside Silver Birch is what I had envisaged.

But he is not quite that easy. I found that like the master artist, dramatist and composer he is either constantly grappling with the major themes of human experience or interpreting abiding universal truths. Ask him a question on a comparatively minor issue and time and time again he will use it as a tributary through which to return to the mainstream of his philosophy.

What I have tried to do then is to dip into this mainstream and show what he has to say about truth, death, fear, love, immortality, the laws of life, the Great White Spirit – his name for God - and a few other relevant subjects.

Of Silver Birch's eloquence there can be no question. In the words of an experienced journalist:

"The teaching of Silver Birch is an example of spirit alchemy, the ability to take the twenty-six letters of the alphabet and transmute them into words of shimmering beauty. As one who spends the whole of his working life in writing, I can appreciate that the faculty of being able to deliver, week after week, words of wisdom, full of eloquent simplicity, in this spontaneous fashion, is in itself evidence of supernormality.

"Like other journalists who live by their pen, I know that simple English is the most difficult to write. I know how you have to polish and re-polish, alter words, delete others, change sentences, consult the dictionary and the thesaurus, before you are satisfied. Yet, here is a dead man who, without hesitation, can produce perfect prose. Everything he says is full of common sense, inspiring, uplifting and ennobling.

"He reduces religion to the fundamental of service to one another. He reveals a God of natural law not a personal, tribal deity subject to caprice, wrath or vengeance. Silver Birch's words glisten like diamonds. You visualize and evolved being, full of love for all humanity, striving to teach truths that are hidden from worldly wise but revealed to minds which are simple, like those of children. He has the one message of service to offer a bewildered mankind, but he seems to have an infinite number of ways of expressing his gospel.

“As one who has read his teaching for years, I salute a master of English, a great literary craftsman whom I have grown to love and admire.”

In a letter to Hannen Swaffer, after reading a copy of *Teachings of Silver Birch*, the first in the series of this guide’s utterances, no less a Press lord than Lord Beaverbrook wrote, “It contains passages of great beauty and I was struck by the simplicity of the work.”

The *Natal Daily News*, reviewing *More Teachings of Silver Birch*, the second book in the series said, “Rarely has the English language been so gently, so simply and so beautifully used.” Selecting it as “The Book of the Week,” the review commended it, “if as nothing else, as a masterly exposition of the English language.” One passage in the book earned the praise, “That beats the drama of a Churchill.”

A similar tribute, this time to *Wisdom of Silver Birch*, the third in the series, was paid by the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, which declared, “Many of this guide’s utterances provide almost Churchillian prose in some of their flights.”

A loftier, yet at the same time, less complicated philosophy could not be found outside the teachings of the great religious leaders. Yet even among these Silver Birch is unique, for he teaches and speaks as one who hails from another realm of existence.

Pantheistic, in the highest sense of the word, permeated with altruism, simplicity and wisdom, his lucid teachings, never cease to stress the supreme importance of the spiritual life and the necessity for compassion in our dealings with our fellow-men. And always he advocates a life of service to what he calls the “Great White Spirit.”

In Silver Birch is to be found the same supreme dedication to suffering humanity and reverence for all life that is the hall-mark of that greatest saint of modern times, Albert Schweitzer. Here, too, is the purity of vision and acknowledgment of one spirit in all things that radiates through the inspired poetry of Shelley. But unlike these two supremely gifted men, whose philosophical speculations, if not their works and deeds, are sometimes above the comprehension of the masses Silver Birch is no intellectual. He has but one theme, repeatedly and unequivocally stressed, adherence to the Law.

What is this Law? Let Silver Birch answer that for himself.

CHAPTER ONE

THE INFALLIBLE LAW

The Great Spirit is infinite, and you are parts of the Great Spirit. If you have perfect faith and live your lives right, then you are able to participate in the bounty of the Great Spirit. If every person in your world had perfect faith, then he would receive. If a person were hungry and yet had perfect faith, then he would receive the answer.

“That is how the Law operates. If you learn to attune yourself to the Law, the results must come. If the results do not come, that only proves that you are not in tune with the Law. Your history books tell you that there have been those from the lowest of the low, the poorest of the poor, who have tried the Law and it has not failed them. You must not point to those who do not try it and ask why it does not work.

“Sometimes the spirit gets crushed and cannot rise above the surrounding circumstances, but if you had perfect faith you could rise above all the troubles of your world. You would turn your faces to the sun, which is but an emblem of the Great Spirit, and say: ‘I am a part of the Great Spirit. I am indestructible. I am eternal. I am infinite. That which is finite and part of the world of matter cannot touch me.’ If you did that, you would not be touched.

“Many people start with fear in their hearts. They are afraid they will not get results, and the element of fear disturbs the vibration. Perfect love casteth out fear. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

“That was taught to you many years ago by one who knew the Law. He showed that when he put it into operation the results were always forthcoming. If you allow the Law to function, then the results must come.

“I will tell you another Law. There is nothing you can have in the world of matter without you pay the price. The price of mediumship is increased sensitiveness. You cannot accumulate wealth without paying the price, because if you do that, and forget the duties of your own spirit, then you may be rich in the goods of your world, but you will be very poor in my world.

“You have the greatest riches within yourselves. You are part of the Great Spirit. There are no riches or fortunes in your world that can be compared with that. We seek to teach you to explore your own gold mines, to reveal the diamonds of the spirit that are within the clay of your own natures.,

May you all learn to respond to vibrations of the highest planes of spirit. May you all realise that you are never alone but always encompassed around and about by a host of those who love you, who seek to guard and guide you and to help and inspire you. And may you, as you unfold your own spirits, realise that you are being drawn closer to the greatest Spirit of all, becoming more in unison with His Law.

“You serve Him by serving the children of matter. When you do that, you are within

reach of His infinite arms; you are surrounded by His love, which will bring you to perfect peace.

“Faith, that is faith alone, sometimes fails when the winds of bitter experience blow. But the faith that is born of knowledge provides a foundation which is so strong that no wind of circumstance can disturb it.

“Blessed are those who believe and have not yet seen, but thrice blessed are they who know and, because they know, place their faith in that which is not yet revealed to them, because they know that the laws of the universe are operated by a power which is love and wisdom.

“You should all have perfect faith, because it is a faith born of knowledge. You have had the proof of the power of the spirit. Now you should have the faith that all things work wisely and well and that, if you put yourselves in tune with the laws of the Great Spirit, then you must reap the operation of those laws.

“You can all banish from your minds the thought that anything that is unenlightened - or, as you would say, evil - can ever touch you. You live and move under the protection of the Great Spirit and His laws.

“If there is no evil in your hearts, then only good can reach you, for only good can dwell where goodness reigns. None but the servants of the Great Spirit come into your presence from my world. You need have no fears. The power which envelops you, the power which supports and seeks to guide you and inspire you is the power that emanates from the Great Spirit of all.

“That power can sustain you in all your trials and difficulties. That power can change your storms into sunshine, and bring you out of the darkness of despair into the light of knowledge. Your feet are set on pathways of progress. There is no need for fear.

“Perfect love casteth out fear. Knowledge dispels fear, for fear is born of ignorance. Where there is love and trust and knowledge, there fear cannot reign. An evolved spirit cannot be afraid at any time, because he knows there is no experience that can come to him in any phase of life that cannot master, for he is the Great Spirit.

“Fear creates its own prison for the soul. You must learn to rise above fear and not to allow its vibrations to hinder you, to have perfect faith and confidence and trust, to know that you can stand on your feet and say: ‘I am the Great Spirit and the wind of circumstances cannot shake me I will rise triumphant over every difficulty because of the infinite power which is within my soul.’ You have power over every circumstance. Would you limit the power of the infinite soul?

The Great Spirit rules over that which is material and that which is spiritual. There are no divisions in His universal kingdom. Do not attempt to divide the life of matter from the life of spirit. They are not distinct and separate. They are parts of one indivisible life, for the things of matter react on the things of spirit and the things of

spirit react on the things of matter.

“You have yet to learn that there are no difficulties which beset those blessed with the power of the spirit that they will not surmount, as long as they in return serve the Great White Spirit wherever they go.

“There are no obstacles in your world we cannot remove, if it is the law that they shall be removed. If, sometimes, the cross you have seems very hard to bear, remember that, although I would give up all my progress to take it away from you, it is better for you to carry it and to learn the lesson it brings. You must consider not only this life, but the whole of eternity.

“If you children of matter would remember that not only are you human but also divine, how much easier would it be for you to live your lives.

Your troubles would melt away, your obstacles would be swept on one side. But you have little faith in the power that is within you. What you call human belongs to the world of matter. That which is divine belongs to the Great Spirit.

“Many years ago you were told to be in the world but not of the world. Because the people of your world have not the faith, then the law cannot be put into operation. You say one has more money and less worry than another. You do not know how their worries compare. The laws of the Great Spirit cannot be cheated.

“You are on earth to build your character. It is the way you face your problems that makes your character. But there is no trouble in your world of matter which is greater than the power you have within you for overcoming it, because the troubles are of the earth, material, and you are part of the Great Spirit, divine.

“There is only one peace - the peace which comes to those who are at one with the Great Spirit, whose hearts beat as one with His great heart, whose wills are at one with His great will, who are at one in soul, mind and heart with the Great Spirit. Then there is peace, because they are in harmony with His laws. There is no other peace.

“I can only teach you the laws. You were told many years ago that the kingdom of heaven is within. It is not without. It is not to be found in the rush of the world of matter. It is to be found within the soul.

“So finely balanced and so perfect is the law that there can be no cheating. Not one person escapes his punishment, and not one loses his reward. Do not judge eternity with the eyes of matter. Do not judge the smaller when you have not seen the greater.

“Do not confuse the transient joys of earth with the enduring things of the spirit. They are tawdry and flimsy. You think in terms of the earth, while I see with the eyes of the spirit. I cannot alter the law to please you.

“If you ask all those who return to you from my side, you will find that they all say the law is perfect. They ever want to return to the world of matter. You seek to find

peace without. I try to show you the eternal peace within. The greatest riches are the riches of the spirit.

“Some people will always worry. Even in the world of spirit they will worry. They will worry because they will realise they could be more perfect, because they are not perfect instruments for the Great Spirit, because only through toil and stress will they outwork the imperfections of their natures and allow the divine to shine through.

“Do you think we are happy when we realise the work that has yet to be done? Do you think we do not worry when we see the children of matter denied that which is necessary for their sustenance, or when we hear the false teaching that is poured out in the name of the Great Spirit?

“Do you think we do not worry when we see darkness where there should be light, when men are imprisoned by desire when they could be free, when we see the chaos that has been caused in your world?

“We worry because our hearts are filled with pity, because we seek to enable the love of the Great Spirit to flow through us and you into your world of matter, where so many are denied the things that are their heritage. The Great Spirit has given them all things in abundance, but they are denied them. You cannot be a great soul when others starve and you are filled with plenty.

“The hardest part of our task is when we have to stand by, sometimes, and see you suffer. We know we must not help because it is a battle of your own spirit. If you win your battle, then we have won, too. If you lose, then we have lost. It is our battle all the time, but we must not lift a finger to help.

“Sometimes I have wept tears because I have seen suffering, and knew I must not help. That is the law. It has hurt me more than it has hurt the sufferer.

“If you do what you know is right, then you cannot do any more. If that means that sometimes you must deny yourself, then you must do it. One day a balance is struck.

“I cannot solve your problems for you. If I tell you what to do, that interferes with your free will. Once I start to tell my medium what he must do and what he must not do, that is the end of his free will. Then his progress begins to suffer.

“It is the way you settle your problems that develops what is within you. You do not develop the spirit when everything is easy and smooth, but when you have difficulties. But there are times when we feel justified in interfering with your judgment.

“I would interfere if a very vital principle were involved. If it meant that my work through any medium would be interrupted, then I would interfere so that the channel would still be free. But where the problems only affect my medium's own evolution, then they are his responsibility and he must work them out for himself.”

Silver Birch once contributed to a discussion on gardening by members of his circle

with these words:

“Sowing and reaping are part of the natural law which I wish was accepted by more people. It is in the cultivation of the fruits of the earth that you learn how inexorable are the laws of the Great Spirit. He who lives close to the soil and sees the operation of nature’s law begins to appreciate the divine handiwork and to realise something of the Mind which has planned all in its orderly sequence.

“That which is garnered is that which has been sown. The seed is always true to its type. You cannot sow the seed of a potato and expect that a lettuce will grow. Always what has been sown will follow unswervingly the dictate of the natural law. And what is true in that realm of nature is equally true in the realm of human life and activity.

“He who lives selfishly must reap the results of selfishness. He who sins must reap the result of his sin. He who is intolerant, bigoted or selfish will reap the results of intolerance, bigotry and selfishness. The law is inexorable; the law is immutable. There is no religious exercise, there is no hymn, no prayer, no sacred book that can interpose and alter the sequence of cause and effect.

“The effect follows cause with methodical and mechanical certainty, and no one has the power, be he called priest or layman, to interfere with that natural process. He who desires the growth of the spirit must live that kind of life which alone can assure spiritual growth.

“The spirit grows through kindness, toleration, sympathy, love, service and doing of good works. Character evolves only when you allow the divine spirit to be made manifest in your daily lives. If you harbour unkind thoughts, thoughts of hatred, of malice, of vengeance, of selfishness, you yourself will be the victim and you yourself must pay the price in a warped, distorted and thwarted character.

“All law is a part of one vast law. All works in harmony because all is part of the divine plan. The lesson of it is that men and women throughout the whole world of matter must seek their salvation by working it out in their daily lives, and abandon all the false theology which teaches that it is possible to cast on to others the results and responsibilities of your own actions.

“Man is the gardener of his own soul. The Great Spirit has provided him with all that is necessary for it to grow in wisdom, grace and beauty. The implements are there, he has but to use them wisely and well.”

On another occasion he declared: “The law is perfect in its operation. Effect always follows cause with mathematical precision. No individual has the power to alter by one hairbreadth the sequence of cause and effect. That which is reaped must be that which is sown, and the soul of every individual registers indelibly all the results of earthly life. He who has sinned against the law bears on his own soul the results of his earthly action, and there will be no progress until reparation has been made for every sinful deed.”

To Silver Birch the law is God and God is the law. He states: “There is no personal God apart from the one that human beings have created; there is no personal Devil apart from the one that human beings have created. There is no golden heaven, no fiery hell. These are the imaginings of those whose views are limited. The Great Spirit is the Law. Know that, and you have learned life’s greatest secret, for once you realise the world is governed by unchangeable, unbreakable, immutable, omnipotent law, you know that justice is done and none can be forgotten in the great scheme of creation.

“That is why all is known. That is why nothing can be omitted. That is why every facet of life finds its place in the universal scheme. That is why nothing can be overlooked, for the law embraces every aspect of life, no matter how tiny, no matter how large, for all is law. Nothing exists except the Law which makes its existence possible. The law reigns supreme. Man’s free will creates confusion and obscures the working of the law in his mind, but the Law exists just the same and must operate. I know that theology have been a great curse to your world, but its day is practically done.”

CHAPTER TWO

REASON FOR SUFFERING

So deep is his conviction, so succinct his interpretation of the law, that at times Silver Birch seems almost indifferent.

“We point to a law that is a law,” he declares, “a law that has always operated; a law that will always operate because the Eternal Mind is responsible for its being. Live with the law and you have harmony and peace within and without: live contrary to the law and you impose discord and chaos within and without. You are spiritual beings. One day you will have to face this fact. Better do so now and save yourselves years of needless difficulty.”

Such unequivocalty could be misconstrued as callousness, especially when an undeveloped soul, or one blinded by the tears of grief, listens to the guide tell of the necessity for suffering and sorrow. But as Silver Birch has explained: “The Great Spirit is infinite love and nothing happens in the whole universe without His knowledge. All suffering automatically brings its own reward because it touches the soul and, in doing so, gives it a greater awareness of the higher, deeper and more profound aspects of the universe.”

He told the circle on one occasion: “Your world does not understand the function of pain and suffering and difficulty and hardship, but all these play an important part in the evolution of the human spirit. Look back in your own lives and see that often the greatest crises, the most difficult problems, the darkest hours, were the stepping stones that led to greater understanding. You would not evolve if forever you dwelt in the sunshine, lived free from care, anxiety and worry, where every approaching

difficulty was automatically smoothed out so that it never touched you, where there were no rough stones in your pathway, where there was nothing for you to conquer. It is in the facing of, and rising supreme over, trouble that you grow.”

“Every experience is part of the pattern of your life,” he told another gathering of the circle. “You try to judge eternity by temporal happenings. You see in matter apparent confusion, but you do not realise that a divine thread runs throughout all your lives.

“In the great universe where harmony is the law, each one of you contributes to the plan. The events in your lives, sometimes of bitterness and despair, of pain and misery, all play their part in preparing the soul gradually for the path that is being trodden.

“The darkness and the light, the shadow and the sunshine, are all but reflections of one whole. Without shadow there could be no light and without light there could be no shadow. The difficulties of life are steps which enable the soul to rise.

“Difficulties, obstacles, handicaps - these are the trials of the soul. And when it conquers them all, it rises stronger, more purified, deepened in intensity and more highly evolved.

“Do you think that the latent powers of the soul, infinite in their possibilities of expression, could realise themselves without difficulty and pain, without shadow, without sorrow, and without suffering and misery? Of course not.

“The joy and the laughter can only be enjoyed to the full when once you have drained the cup of sorrow to the dregs, for as low as you can fall in the scale of life so correspondingly you can rise. The more you have tasted and experienced that which seems the shadow of earthly life, the more you will appreciate, because of it, the greater joys of the sunshine.

“Your experiences are all part of your evolution. One day, freed from the trammels of flesh, with eyes not clouded by matter, you will look back in retrospect and view the life you have lived on earth. And out of the jigsaw of all the events, you will see how every piece fits into its allotted place, how every experience was a lesson to quicken the soul and to enable it to have greater understanding of its possibilities.

“There is no experience that comes to the human soul, which, rightly understood and rightly faced, does not leave you better for it. Can you contemplate a world of matter where there were no difficulties, no trials, no troubles, no pain, no suffering? There would be no evolution. There would be nothing to surmount, you would decay.”

CHAPTER THREE

LOVE'S SUPREME POWER

“There is a great power in the universe which has never been subject to the analytical scrutiny of laboratories, which cannot be resolved by chemicals or by scalpels, yet it is so real that it transcends all other forces which have been measured and weighed and dissected.”

Silver Birch is referring to the power of love. “That love,” he goes on, “is deathless because it is part of the Great Spirit, the creative spirit of all life, part of the power which has fashioned life; it is indeed the very breath and the very essence of life. And wherever love exists, sooner or later those who are united by its willing bonds will find one another again despite all the handicaps and obstacles and impediments that may be in the way.

On one occasion, Silver Birch was asked: “You say, ‘The only bond between those who have passed over is love.’ What is the position when A truly loves B, but A’s love is not reciprocated by B, and they have both passed over? Is A separated from B because of this, or is he burdened, so to speak, by the nearness of A because of this rather one-sided, but sincere, attachment?”

“That,” said the guide, “is a very good question, but the word ‘love’ is one of the most misused ones in your world. I hear them sometimes say: ‘Oh, give my love to so and so,’ whom they intensely loathe, many others, perhaps carried away by infatuation, and let me be quite honest, by physical passion, think that the attraction is one of love.

“First let us be clear: the real love is the love of selflessness; the love that seeks nothing for itself, and in its highest form embraces the whole of humanity. You are not an evolved soul until you can say, because you believe it, ‘I love all mankind.’

“That is an ideal, and your world is a long way from it. But there is the love, the undeniable love, between man and woman who are complementary to one another, that is, they are two in form, but one in purpose - they harmonise, they are indeed, as your poet has expressed it, ‘Two hearts that beat as one.’ Now, where that love has found itself, there is never any separation. Those whom the natural law has joined by love can never be sundered in your world or in mine.

“Where there is that love, and here I am afraid I am going to be controversial, it is always reciprocated. There are aspects of affection, devotion, the desire to serve, maternal instincts, which are believed to be love, but the real love, that only comes once to each man or woman, whether on earth or in the world of spirit, is always reciprocal. The problem does not arise, for in our world, in the fullness of time each finds the half of its own being.”

A member of the circle asked: “Are both people aware at the same time that it is a love that is reciprocated?”

“Not necessarily on earth, but they are in the world of spirit,” was the reply.

“One of the two may know about it before the other,” it was suggested to Silver Birch.

He replied: “But the two halves instinctively, because they are two halves, must recognise one another. That does not happen in your world always because your vision, regarding things of the spirit, is often blind.”

“Physical things could stop it,” said somebody.

“Yes, physical circumstances,” agreed Silver Birch, “but real love is so magnetic, is so overwhelming in its attraction, that it must find itself and claim itself, when once you have got rid of the imperfections of the earth which were the deterrents to recognition.

“Love takes many forms, ranging from friendship founded on sympathetic attraction and mutual interest, to the supreme heights where, without thought of self, it seeks to serve wherever it can,” said Silver Birch, in his reply to someone who asked for his definition of love. “Love is a word which is misused in your world,” the guide went on. “Very often those who use it do not mean love at all. It is mistaken for the activities of the senses when there is only the desire for gratification of certain instincts. But love as I understand it is a part of the spirit stirring within, seeking expression when it realises its kinship with its divine creator.

“The greatest love is the love that has no trace of selfishness, that does not seek in any way to perform any action because it will bring some satisfaction to the individual. That is human love in its greatest aspect. It is the spirit that has enthused all who desire to uplift mankind, to help the needy, to sustain the weak, to fight the vested interests that prevent the unfortunate from extracting the beauty that life could offer them.

“All who, in their own land and in foreign lands, have sought with altruistic motive to raise the standard of mankind, to make it aware of its infinite potentialities, are exhibiting love in its finest form. There are degrees - when the same spirit animates a man or woman to serve the object of his or her affection. That need not be selfish; it can be unselfish.

“And there is the lowest kind of love, the love that is restricted, that desires to protect and help only the ones to whom it feels an attraction and feels no pity, no mercy, no sympathy and no compassion for strangers. Divine love covers the universe. It is love that has shaped its course, it is love that has regulated its evolution, it is love which is part of the divine beneficence, it is love which actuates all those advanced spiritual beings who, forfeiting all that they have gained by their attainment, return to your cold, grey, unattractive world to give service to those who need it.”

CHAPTER FOUR

ETERNAL TRUTH

The simple truths we teach are indeed truths which are eternal. These truths of the spirit are intended to free your world by teaching man how to free himself.

“Always we begin with the individual, the unit which, when it is multiplied by millions, constitutes the world in which you live. It is a very slow and arduous process, illuminating one by one, but it could not be done otherwise. Mass conversion always fails. When the hypnotic spell is broken and the emotions recede to normal, it is all forgotten. And, indeed, perhaps those who have experienced these heightening calls to their senses are sometimes a little ashamed.

“And so, despite all opposition and hostility and antagonism, we continue to labour, reiterating the simple truths which in the end must prevail, knowing that even as little drops of water will in time wear away a stone, to one by one the light comes and the truth is embraced. Where it is understood and appreciated in all the fullness of its implications, there is to be found a soul who will never look back, who will never regret saying farewell to the bonds which held him for too long. You have moved out of darkness into light.”

It is in such beautiful prose that Silver Birch broaches the most involved and enigmatic subject ever to bemuse the minds of philosophers and priests - that of truth. Who can deny that here, in the phrases of a spirit guide, is contained an interpretation of truth that for logical analysis of the term and awareness of its tremendous spiritual significance as a value in the moulding of human conduct, can have been seldom equalled?

“When you are children you are taught according to your capacity to assimilate,” Silver Birch has explained. “You begin with the letters of your alphabet and, as the mind grows, you are taught to make words and to read. Gradually the knowledge contained in the printed word becomes accessible to you. As to the amount of knowledge that you receive, that is dependent wholly and solely upon your capacity for appreciating it. There is an infinity of wisdom, range upon range upon range, but it can only become available to you as you are mentally and spiritually equipped to receive it.

“But no knowledge alters truth. There is no wisdom that in any way alters the truth of any teaching. If it was true in the past it is true to-day and will be true tomorrow. Truth is constant and eternal. You can add to wisdom, you can add to knowledge, but you cannot bring new truth. Your world has all the truth it requires for its essential purpose - the fundamental truths of kindness, service, love. It knows what it should do in order to have a better world.

“All that is necessary for your growth, progress, unfoldment, evolution has been made known throughout all the generations. If man would but follow the truth which has been revealed he could achieve here and now on earth far more of the

divinity within him than has ever been manifested.

“All the great teachers, the instruments of the spirit who have added their lustre to the world, have taught truths that were similar in basis. Each came to reveal the spiritual nature of man, to draw attention to the eternal qualities possessed by every human being. Each taught of the infinite soul, the divine spark, the portion of the Great Spirit resident within all human life.

“Each taught those principles which, if adopted and followed, would enable that spirit to have a greater expression. Each made it clear that living according to spiritual ideals would banish from your world all the miserable spectres that haunt it, all the fears and miseries and sadnesses which have needlessly afflicted it for too long.

“Love thy neighbour as thyself, give service to those who need it, help the weary and the thirsty, heal the sick, comfort the mourner, visit those who are in affliction - these are the truths that have been taught a long time ago. If man would but practise them he could transform the whole of his world and make it impossible for war, with all its hideous horrors, to be visited on him again.

“Let me make clear what is our attitude. It is that man has at his command all that which is necessary for his growth and for his spiritual equipment. There are many sacred books, there have been many teachers, many inspired men and women who have caught glimpses of the inner life and each in his own way has interpreted what he has seen. But, unfortunately, the simple truth which has been revealed from the higher aspects of life has been overlaid.

“Men have built on it edifices of doctrine, of dogma, of creed, of ritual, of ceremony. A whole bulwark of theology has been placed on the foundation of simple spiritual truth until now the foundations are completely forgotten. Thus it is that we have constantly sought out instruments through whom the message of the spirit could be given in all its pristine beauty, in all the quality of its simplicity, radiant because it is unadorned.

We are not concerned with systems of belief fashioned by the minds of man; we are concerned with the truths of the spirit as they have been revealed in the world of spirit where we are not confronted with the illusions of your early life: It is because we have seen so many human wreckages, so many human derelicts coming to our world, it is because we have seen the transition of so many thousands completely unfitted in every way for the life that confronts them, ignorant, full of misconception, filled with prejudice, that we decided that it would be far simpler if man, whilst on earth, could have in his midst the simple truth that would prepare him for that life which one day will be his abiding reality.

“And so we have declared constant war on all those systems and organisations, on all those beliefs which stand in the way, all the obstacles that have needlessly been created, all the superstitions which becloud and befuddle the mind, so that all the

children of the Great Spirit can have at their command the eternal truths which will enable them to live their lives as the Great Spirit intended that they should.

“Never mind what others say, forget all the condemnations and all the denunciations. These are the simple truths of the spirit that will stand forever. They will answer every test that reason demands. They will not demean your intelligence. They are simple, so simple, that they can be grasped and understood by any ordinary individual. These are the truths that will prevail long after all priestcraft has completely failed - simple, eternal truths of the spirit, founded on the eternal, natural laws.

“We require no popes, no archbishops, no priests, no clergymen, no churches, no temples, no synagogues. We build no system of theology. We enunciate simple truths and we are determined that, given the instruments, these truths will continue to permeate every form of society, so that all men can be free in body, mind and spirit, and never again shall they become bondmen living in slavery. The darkness of ignorance will have perished and the light, the effulgent light of truth, will reign in its place.

The simple truth about ourselves . . . how few of us really know this? There are those, no doubt, who think they possess a more penetrating insight into the character and personality of others than they are able to focus on themselves. They feel qualified to pass judgment on one another. “It’s about time he realised. . . When will he learn? . . . If only he could see himself as others see him. . . .” We are all familiar with the cliches of those who know the simple truth about everybody but themselves.

Then along comes someone who, in spiritual stature and pertinence of comment stands out among his fellows and commands respect. When such a person speaks we can be sure that what he has to say about our true selves is eternally appropriate.

Such a man was Socrates, such a man was Jesus, and such a man is Silver Birch. This inhabitant of another world, entrancing the body and using the vocal chords of a London medium, breaks through all the barriers of mediumship and language, and in effortless, memorable words, declares:

“What I can do is to remind you of the eternal, un-failing principles. When all else in the world of matter has been understood, explored and explained, there still remains the natural laws of the Great Spirit which no man has ever completely explored or explained. They are infinite in their conception and in their application. If all of you, confronted as you are daily by events which call on you to make decisions, could remember that you are spiritual beings and what is important is not what happens materially, although it has its place, but what happens to you spiritually, to your nature, your eternal nature.

“All the things of matter will fade away and will become absorbed in the dust of which the earthly world is made. Ambitions, desires, the acquisition of wealth, all

these are of no account, but you will always remain as spiritual beings, and your richness will be just what is contained within your own nature, no more and no less. That is the lesson to be learned in all earthly life. If you learn it you are wise because you have found yourself and, having found yourself, you will have found the Great Spirit.

“I see so many in your world, frantic, despairing, not knowing where to turn, rushing hither and thither with no time to spare because so many ‘important’ things have to be done, and yet the most important of all is neglected and overlooked. Is not this the lesson of all our teaching? Is not this the purpose behind the return of every being from our world, so that you should derive from your lives the joy, the satisfaction that should be yours as children of the Great Spirit?”

“That is more important than what is called religion, or churches, or creeds, or doctrines, more important than all the things which have divided mankind and caused war and chaos and confusion. It is just the simple truth about their own natures. And yet it is possessed by the few and not by the many.”

CHAPTER FIVE THE DIVINE PLAN

Spirit communication by beings such as Silver Birch is no sporadic, unorganised affair. There is a plan behind it all which, when described by the guide, as in this chapter, makes enthralling reading.

“Our work is to give that which has a purpose, a significance, so that, while it demonstrates the existence of law, it also enables comfort to be given and knowledge to be spread. Our work is not only to reveal the existence of laws beyond the physical but to reveal truths of the spirit.

“We have a gigantic system of misrepresentation to oppose. We have to undo the work of centuries. We have to destroy the superstructure of falsity that has been built upon the foundations of creeds.

“We are striving always to teach the children of matter how to be free and how to bask in the sunlight of spiritual truth, how to cast off the serfdom of creedal slavery. That is not an easy task, for once the trappings of religion have mastered you, it takes a long time for spiritual truth to penetrate that thick wall of superstition.

“We strive always to reveal the religious significance of spiritual truth, for when your world understands its spiritual import there will be a revolution mightier than all the revolutions of war and blood.

It will be a revolution of the soul and, all over the world, people will claim what is their due - the right to enjoy the full liberties of the spirit. Away will go every restriction which has put fetters on them.

“Our allegiance is not to a Creed, not to a Book, not to a Church, but to the Great Spirit of life and to His eternal natural laws.

“A great power of the spirit will descend into your world of matter. In all its countries a mighty force of the spirit will be felt, for there is a great work to be done to counteract the selfishness and the ignorance of your world. In time it will conquer, but, in the process, there will be much travail.

“Plenty of workers have come to take their stand at your side. There are those who are known to you, those who are bound to you with ties of blood and others who are attracted to serve you out of the love that they bear for you. When you think of those whose names you know, try to realise the countless host of the unknown, who serve without any desire to be known or recognised but who give their power to be used.

“The world will not be converted in a blinding flash like Saul on the road to Damascus. Gradually, the light of spiritual truths will break through, as more people become aware of the great knowledge and more instruments are available for the power of the Great White Spirit to use. You must remember that the things of the spirit require careful nurture and progress. Sudden conversions would not be enduring, and our work is intended to be permanent.

“Each soul that becomes an instrument for the Great Spirit, each soul that moves out of darkness into the light, out of ignorance into knowledge, out of superstition into truth, is helping to advance the world, for each one of these is a nail that is driven into the coffin of the world’s materialism.

“What you must all learn is that there are two forms of development. You can unfold that which is of the soul and you can unfold that which is of the spirit. One is the development of only the psychic faculty, and the other is soul-growth.

“Where you get the development of the psychic without the spiritual, there you have a low plane of vibration. When you get a combination of both, then you have not only a great medium but a great man or woman.

“What a glorious message we have for your world of matter - a message that makes men free and teaches them to rejoice in their divine heritage; a message that teaches them to throw off all shackles and bonds; a message that teaches them to rejoice in the fullness of spiritual knowledge; a message that shows them how to live not only on the planes of matter, but on the planes of spirit; a message that brings them beauty, love and wisdom, understanding, truth and happiness; a message that speaks of service, service, service.

“And yet we are denied by those who do not understand the revelation of the Great Spirit and who deny the spirit, as the power of the spirit has been denied throughout all times.

“The work that we do becomes more and more necessary. Your world is full of bloodshed, tears of misery and bitterness. In its blindness, your world will not live

according to the laws of the Great Spirit. It has chosen the path that leads to darkness and to despair. We offer the knowledge that leads to hope, to light, to peace and to harmony. Your world may despise us, in its ignorance. It may reject the message that we bring. It may deny the power that accompanies us. But our great truth must prevail, for it is of the Great Spirit.

“Those who strive to live against the law reap for themselves the results of a bitter harvest. Those who live with the law reap a harvest of happiness and plenty, in the things of matter and in the things of the spirit.

“Through all the darkness that prevails, do not abandon hope, but be assured in the knowledge that those who work with you for the upliftment of humankind, who strive to bring better conditions into your world of matter, will prevail, for the power that is on their side is the mightiest power in the universe.

You will not achieve that which is worth achieving without travail, without sorrow. Your world must learn its lessons in the only way it can learn them. We are breaking through all over the world of matter. Our message illumines minds in every part of your world, and, as the light of the spirit breaks in on your world, so its rays disperse the darkness of your materialism.

“We do not seek to terrify you with threats of punishment. We do not seek to make you craven cowards, living your lives because of fear. We strive to make you realise the latent divinity that is yours, that you may express more of the Great Spirit, that you may rise to greater heights and fill your mind with greater truth and wisdom.

“We urge you to be dissatisfied with what you have already received, because only through discontent and the desire to reach out can greater knowledge come. He who is satisfied stagnates: he who is discontented struggles towards greater freedom.

“We never say to you, ‘Do not use your reason, have faith only.’ We say, ‘Use that which the Great Spirit has given you. Test us. Examine us. If aught that we say is debasing, cruel or immoral, then reject us.’

“If we seek always to teach you to live nobler lives, lives of greater self-sacrifice and of idealism, then surely that demonstrates that the hall-mark of the Great Spirit is stamped upon our teaching.

“If we raise up one soul, if we give comfort to one who mourns, if we give hope to one who is faint-hearted, if we give strength to one who is weary, then has it not been worth doing?

“Think of the many whom our message disturbs, whom it puzzles, who are perplexed, who, bound to a creed, cannot escape - yet they hear the voice of freedom calling to their imprisoned souls and their minds struggle to be free.

“They are the ones for whom the message is intended, those to whom it comes as an incentive to reach out to what before was unattainable. All truth is but a stepping stone.

“If you hear through the lips of the medium through whom I address you that which makes your reason revolt, that which contradicts the love of the Great Spirit, that which is foolish, that which is an insult to your intelligence, then know that my day is done and I have failed.

“Though I have spoken to you many, many times, I do not think I have ever said anything which is contrary to the highest aspirations of the soul. For our appeal is always to the highest that is within you.

“The world must learn to perform its own salvation. There is no ready-made plan. There is no prepared, cut-and-dried system. Your world has to learn that, behind what it regards as the manifestations of life, there is the eternal reality of the spirit, that the children of matter are not only worldly beings but spiritual beings expressing themselves through bodies of matter.

“The bodies of matter must be as perfect as they can be made through having all the necessities of life freely at their disposal, as the Great Spirit would have them. Then their spirits must be freed from all dogmatic and credal trammels, so that they do not give allegiance to things that have no real or spiritual value, so that they work only for that which is true, so that the warring and the quarrelling and the strife over creeds and dogmas, which have held your world in chains for thousands of years, can be abolished.

“We preach the gospel of the spiritual brotherhood of all peoples, with the Great White Spirit as the common Father. What stands in the way is the earthly conception, the churches built on error, the usurping of privilege, the pride and the power of tyrants, petty tyrants who hold the whip hand.

“As our teaching grows in your world, it will mean the end of all separateness between peoples. It will mean the end of national barriers. It will mean the end of race distinctions, class distinctions, colour distinctions and all the distinctions between churches and chapels, temples, mosques and synagogues, for gradually all will learn that they have a part of the Great Spirit’s truth and that the part enshrined in the heart of every other religion in no way contradicts that portion which is precious to them.

“So, out of the apparent confusion, the divine pattern will take its shape and harmony and peace will come. I tell you these things, so that you can understand part of the great plan, the part that we who return from the world of spirit play in it, and the part that each one of you must play in it before your earthly course is run.

“What we preach fits in with all the noble and elevated ideas that have come to the vision of all the reformers, all the saints, all the seers and all the idealists who have striven in every age to render service. Because they were great souls, their spiritual eyes caught glimpses of the life that could be, and that vision of beauty sustained them in all their adversity and struggle. They realised the spirit plan that, one day, will be put into practice, and so they strove to raise up the children of matter, to

serve.

“Though they were vilified, though they were opposed and ridiculed by those they came to help, their work lived on, even as the work that is being done to-day in countless small temples, such as this, will live on, though many of the people will be forgotten. The mighty power of the spirit has been launched once again in your world of matter, and the children of matter do not possess the power to stem that mighty tide.

“Your world thinks it solves its problems by the shedding of blood. But no problem was ever solved in that way, for bloodshed is needless and leads nowhere. Why cannot they use the reason which the Great Spirit has given them? Why do they think that their only solution must be to kill as many as possible, that the one who is the greatest killer is accounted the victor? It is a strange world you live in.

“Your world needs our message, the message of the spirit, the realisation of spirit truths, the knowledge that there are spiritual laws and guidance both from above and from within, so that in its perplexity it may learn where to turn to find comfort and guidance and help.

“We seek nothing for ourselves. We want no glory. We have simply the desire to be of service, to reveal once again the laws which have been forgotten, so that the world of matter may rediscover those powers of the spirit which can bring it new hope and new life.

“In your perplexity, when all the old standards are being discarded, when all authorities are being questioned and their power waning, we seek to reveal the Great Spirit, the supreme Authority, through His laws which never fail and which never err. If the world of matter will learn to order its life in accordance with those laws, peace and concord will rule once again.

“These things are part of the great mission which we all have to perform so that, amidst the crumbling ruins of the discarded beliefs, mankind may not reject all because of his doubt and scepticism, but may learn to sift the wheat from the chaff, the fact from the myth, and hold on to that which is precious, which is enshrined in all religions, the great truths of the spirit, long overlaid with the imaginations of the children of matter.

“The power of the spirit - which inspired those in days gone by, which gave them vision and courage, enthusiasm and desire to serve - is available to-day if the children of matter will learn to look for it in the operation of those laws which are at their disposal.

“The authority of Churches, of books, of creeds, all these are waning. They are gradually being discarded. But the authority of spiritual truths abides for ever. When I return to your world I see the confusion and the chaos, and I realise they could be dissipated if the clear light of the spirit were allowed to penetrate, if, instead of just a chink, there could be a strong illuminating ray.

“Why do they prefer the darkness when they could have the light? Why do they prefer ignorance when they could have knowledge? Why do they prefer superstition when they could have wisdom? Why do they prefer the dead bones of a creed when they could have the living truth of the spirit? Why do they prefer the dust of theology when they could have the waters of spiritual wisdom?”

“There are souls blindly groping in self-imposed darkness, chained when they could be free, servile when they could easily be men of freedom. But I am afraid they have worn their chains for so long that they are afraid to discard them. A bird that is in a cage for a long time is afraid that it cannot fly when it is released.

“It is good when they throw off their shackles, but they must have some path which they can tread. We do not want them to be helpless, without a sign. We want them to be free, but we want them to know where their freedom will lead.

“When you have been in bondage for a long time, there is a tendency in the newly-found freedom that you will not listen to any guidance that comes to you. You say: ‘I have had enough of all this. I have had years of doubt and perplexity. Now that I have discarded it I do not any longer wish to be associated with what is called religion.’

“Sometimes, with the casting off of shackles, there is a violent reaction. I do not want too much attention paid to me, the individual, the messenger. I am only concerned with the message. Your world has for too long concerned itself with teachers, whom it has aggrandised into exaggerated positions, and has forgotten what they came to teach.

“Our mission no longer is to exalt men and women into high places of authority, but to seek to reveal truth, knowledge and wisdom. What does it matter whether I am a teacher of great distinction or a lowly beggar, so long as the seal of truth stamps what I say? Our appeal is no longer to names and authorities and books, but to reason alone.

We demand nothing that is contrary to your intelligence. We preach nothing that you can say is untrue, that is undignified, that is ignoble; that debases mankind. We seek to reveal that which will elevate the whole human race and give it a true conception of its position in life and in the universe, its relationship to the Great White Spirit and an understanding of its kinship with other members of the vast human family in your world.

“No longer will we resort to books or teachers or authorities, but only to divine reason, and we appeal to her. Our truth will not be spread by the citation of a text said to be stamped with divine authority. If it violates reason, then reject what we say. But you will find that we appeal to the highest and the best instincts, that we only seek to brush away old falsehoods and to bring the great truth that man will prize. What your world calls religion must be founded on truth, and you must seek to discard all that will not stand the onslaught of reason.

“We strive to reveal these truths, not only as they are known in their relation to the laws of the spirit, but also to the laws of matter, for to us the world of matter is part of the universe of the Great Spirit, and you cannot be ‘religious’ if you are indifferent to the sufferings of despairing humanity. Those who serve are accounted as the great ones by us, and the service they render is not confined to helping the soul to find truth, for there is other service to be rendered.

“There is the service of freeing poor, racked bodies from pain, the service of fighting injustice and tyranny, the service of fighting hate, the service of preserving freedom and the service of abolishing the evils of your world and giving the spirit in man a chance to express itself as the Great Spirit desires that it should.

“I am sorry that the children of the Great Spirit have wandered so far from the things of the spirit that a rap on a table has to be used to make them understand His laws.

“You are all parts of the Great Spirit. He says to you: ‘Here are all my laws and here, in you, is a part of me. Beside you there is all that can be used to make a perfect universe. I give you all the tools and you can choose between the things that are right and the things that are wrong. You can try to work with my laws or against them.’

“The children have chosen. But always those who are the masters in the world of spirit have to make sure that they incarnate into matter men who are so tuned to the vibrations of the Great Spirit that, through them, His work can go on. So far have the children wandered that they are blind to the things of the spirit and only understand the things of matter.

“But after the storms and the wind have blown through the world there always comes the new life of the spring. When the snow lies on the ground and all looks very bleak, you are not able to see the freshness of the spring. But it comes.

“And gradually, as the great sun of life moves through the heavens of the Great Spirit, so the majesty of life comes to its fullest. Throughout the whole world of matter there is a great cloud of discontent. There will come the spring of dreams and the summer of fulfilment.

“It will come quickly or slowly as the children of the Great Spirit exercise their free will. But wherever in the world of matter one man strives to uplift one other man, then behind him there are a thousand spirits who try to make his victory a greater one. No effort for good can ever be lost. No desire to serve can ever be wasted.

“There must be a pioneer who hacks his way through the forest and makes the path a little easier for those who follow. Gradually the path is beaten down and worn smooth.

“Sometimes I see the many masters in my world, with tears in their eyes, looking down on the follies of those who, one day, will realise how they have thrown away

the great opportunities they had of raising up the children of the earth. And sometimes I see their faces wreathed in smiles because, in your world, some unknown man has rendered a service which lights a new torch of hope in the world.

“I, like many others, have come nearer to the vibrations of the earth to help to push forward that great new world which waits just round the corner. I come to teach you the laws of the Great Spirit, and to show you how, if you live according to them, the bounty of the Great Spirit can be poured into your hearts and minds.

“I only see a world filled with sorrow that should be filled with happiness, darkness where there should be light, hunger where there should be plenty. I see that the Great Spirit has provided everything, and yet there are those who are preventing its distribution. There are obstacles which must be swept away.

“I cannot do it. I cannot even criticise. I can only tell you how the law can work if you, who are still encased in matter, will allow it to work through you. Those who do must point a finger of scorn to the things of earth and show the remedies of the Great Spirit.

“Show in your own lives you know the things of the spirit because the power of the spirit is in you. If between us, we can in one case bring happiness where there was unhappiness, knowledge where there was ignorance, then at least we shall have done so service. We do not seek to take away from you the responsibilities of your own lives, but only to try to inspire you to live so that men may know the Great Spirit is working through you.

“It makes me sad, sometimes, to hear people say: ‘Oh yes, we give them bread, but they must thank the Great Spirit first.’ Why not give the bread and not worry whether they thank the Great Spirit or not? If a man is hungry, why not give him bread? Or they say: ‘You can sleep here, but you must say a prayer.’

“Have you who possess this knowledge of Spiritualism ever tried to strike a balance? You have something that your world cannot measure. You have the priceless knowledge of the truths of the Great Spirit. You have the realisation that your soul is linked with his great soul. You have the knowledge that you are a part of the Great Spirit. You have learned how to respond to the vibrations of the messengers that the Great Spirit sends to watch over you.

“Compared with these things, the things of matter are as mere baubles. You will live for many thousands of years. You will find that the knowledge you have gained here and the wisdom you have learned are of greater value to the life of your immortal soul than the few things that the body of matter seeks in the world of matter.

“Do not judge anything by the apparent result. You see only with the eyes of matter. If you could see with the eyes of the spirit, you would know that with every child there is perfect justice. Sometimes I listen to your prayers and sometimes to the prayers of others. I think that if the Great Spirit were to answer them all you would not be happy with the result.

“I have spoken to many who have crossed from your world to mine. I have not yet met one who has said, when he saw with the eyes of the spirit, that he has not been served well by the Great Spirit.

“There are three great problems in the world of matter. One is ignorance, another is sorrow, and the third is poverty. These three things you will always have until knowledge of the spirit is joined with politics and the children of earth think and live as the new knowledge shows them.

But the tide of victory rolls on. The old order dies, giving place to the new. The new world is coming. But do not think that, because of this victory, there will be no more dark places. There will still be much shedding of tears. There will be many aching hearts. There is great sacrifice to be made.

“That which is a part of the Great Spirit cannot be achieved without sacrifice. You cannot build up unless you tear down. In times of great material disaster, the people of your world begin to examine the foundations of the things of the spirit. When all the things of matter have failed, they look for a reed to clutch, and they look into the systems that have been tried and found wanting.

Then the truths of the spirit begin to emerge, and they begin to build their new world – a world where the laws of the Great Spirit begin to play their proper part. Until you do that, there will always be great troubles. The world will never become perfect, because the nearer perfection it becomes, the more will it realise the perfection in front of it.”

CHAPTER SIX

AFTER WE DIE

A description of the spirit world and the conditions of the people who live in it was given one evening. Silver Birch said, in discussing the condition of one who had recently passed on, that life in the lower stages of the next world duplicated in every detail our lives on earth.

“I find it difficult to grasp that the astral world is identical with this world,” said one sitter.

“The next stage of life to earth is a replica of your world of matter,” declared Silver Birch. “Were it not so, the shock for the many who are uninstructed and ignorant would be more than they could stand. And so it has to be accomplished by very easy stages. The next stage of life resembles your world. That is why so many do not know that they have passed beyond the physical.

“Here essentially it is a world of thought, where thought is reality. And, being a thought world, thought moulds every expression of its life and its activity. Being so near to your world, and peopled by men and women who are naturally still very material in their outlook on life, the expression of their thought is very gross and so,

whatever they think is in terms of physical things.

“They cannot think of life apart from its physical aspects. There has never filtered into their consciousness any understanding of a life apart from the purely physical. They cannot visualise spiritual activities and, because they cannot visualise them, they have no place in their scheme of things. But there are degrees of astral life, for gradually as awakening comes the grossness slowly but surely becomes more refined. And life, they begin to see, is something beyond its material aspect. When spiritual realisation dawns they are dead to the astral world and they begin to live in the world of spirit. There are many deaths and many births.”

“Are the experiences of people in the astral world subjective or objective?” asked a sitter.

“It is an objective life because life in my world is regulated by people who dwell on that particular plane of expression. As you advance beyond that, you leave it behind. As the spirit qualifies itself, by growth, progress and evolution, so it naturally passes to the next stage of spirit life. It is very objective in its own field of expression.”

“So it is not a dream world,” the sitter said.

“When they have passed beyond it, it is a dream world,” said Silver Birch. “Whilst they are living in it, it is a real world to them. You call them dreams only by comparison. They are not dreams when you are dreaming them. They are dreams when you awaken and, recalling the experience, you say, ‘That was a dream.’ So, when the spirit and the lower stages of the astral, it recollects those experiences and says, ‘They were dreams.’ But when it endured them, they belonged to reality.”

“Do we all start our life in the spirit world on this lower astral plane?” a sitter wanted to know.

“Oh, no, it is for the uninstructed and the ignorant,” said the guide, “those who are unaware of the existence of spiritual realities, who cannot visualise anything beyond the purely physical. The astral world is part of the world of spirit. It is one life in many varying grades, from the lower reaches to the highest stages. It is not divided into watertight compartments. We have to give you terms that you can understand.”

Telling about growth in the spirit world, Silver Birch said: “You do not climb from one sphere into another; you grow, you evolve. The lower gives way to the higher. You ‘die’ and are born again and again. You do not lose the astral body in quite the same way that you lose the material body. It becomes more rarified, it becomes refined, as the lower drops away. That is its death, for death really means transformation, resurrection, the rising of the higher out of the lower. Whenever we try to explain our world of spirit, which is freed from the limitations of your world, with its restrictions of time and space, we always have difficulty. The lower cannot grasp the higher, the finite cannot include the infinite, the lesser cannot hold the greater, but only by striving can you increase your capacity to understand.”

“In the astral world, does one retain such things as the heart and pulse beats?” asked a sitter at another séance.

“Whether they retain these organs depends on their state of consciousness,” said Silver Birch. “If they are completely ignorant of a life after yours and they do not think here is another world, then they have a complete replica of everything they had in the physical world, and they continue every bodily function in all its details - *every* function.”

“And what happens at the passing of someone who understands about the spirit world?” asked the sitter.

“The astral body goes through a process of rarification” the spirit replied. “As you appreciate that there is no need for certain organs, you gradually find they become atrophied and in the end they disappear.”

“Does that happen immediately after passing, or is it a gradual process?” a sitter wanted to know.

“It depends on the state of your consciousness,” said the guide. “The higher your consciousness, the less the need for adjustment. You must always remember that ours is a mind world, a spirit world where consciousness is king. The mind is enthroned and mind rules. What mind dictates is reality. When you have read of the appearance of those who come from the higher, or inner, planes, do you not find they are described as shining figures radiating light, rather than as having shape? That is because personality has gone. It is because there is less of the bodily expression about them.”

“What shape are the higher intelligences?” asked a sitter.

“What shape is beauty?” countered the guide. “what shape is love? What shape is light?”

“Does colour form the basis of recognition when you get beyond shape?” asked another sitter.

“Yes,” said the guide, “but whereas you are governed by certain primary colours we have other ranges of colour beyond your comprehension. We can identify some of the higher teachers by the radiance of their appearance, by the light that comes with the message; because often there is no form of any kind. There is a thought, accompanied by radiance.”

The closeness of those on the Other Side was stressed when Silver Birch mentioned many dead friends and relatives of the sitters who had asked him to convey messages.

“Try to remember that all of them are real, human beings,” he said, “who are just as interested in you as ever they were before. Though they do not speak to you, and you cannot hear them, they are here, each striving to do the utmost to assist you. They are closer than you know. They know your secrets, the unspoken desires of your

minds, your wishes, your hopes and your fears. And all the while they bring their influence to bear on you, to guide you so that you may be able to extract from your earthly lives the experiences so necessary for the growth of your souls. They are not vague, shadowy, nebulous beings, but real men and women who love you still and who are in reality closer to you than ever they have been before.”

“How do the dead pass their time?” Silver Birch was I asked. “Have they time just as we have with hours of light and darkness, or is it another sort of time? What do they do? Do they work or study, or amuse themselves?”

The guide replied: “That has been answered many, many times. The question of time is one of interest because we are not dependent on your definition of time.

“Yours is a demarcation for purposes of convenience. You have charted certain passages as minutes or hours, or seconds, or days, and all that is based upon the rotation of the earth and its relationship to the sun. We do not have night and day. Our source of light is not the same as yours. Therefore, we do not have time in the sense in which you have it. Our measurement of time depends upon our spiritual state, that is, we feel time in the sense of enjoyment. Time, to us, is a mental experience.

“In the lower spheres, where life is not very enjoyable, it seems a long time to them. In higher spheres - and I am speaking relatively - where there is much more congenial activity, time seems more speedy in the sense that there is always some new phase of interesting labour. But it is not apportioned in hours, or days, or months, or years.

“As to the way in which we work, that depends on the individual. There is plenty of activity connected with the mind and the spirit. The difficulty the questioner has is in understanding spiritual experiences in terms of physical measurement, but there are wide and boundless pursuits of the mind and the spirit, cultural, educational, purposive, actual in their effect on your physical world, to engage us and occupy us for as long as we wish to be so occupied.”

“But,” asked a sitter, “the question arises - if you want to book something ahead, how do you do it, if time has no meaning as it has here?”

“Do you mean,” asked the guide, “if I wished to meet someone? Then I send a thought and if it is convenient we meet. There are no letters to be written.”

“What if you wanted to arrange to meet somebody at some specified time?”

“It does not happen that way,” was the answer. “If I am desired to attend some group, the request is sent to me mentally, I receive it and I go. It would not be sent to me now because it would be known that I am at this moment speaking with you. There are no diaries; it is a world of the mind and of the spirit.”

Someone in the circle asked if there were trains in the spirit world, and the guide answered: “There are no trains unless you think you have a train to catch and then

there is a train for you to catch. It is hard to understand, isn't it? But it is like a dream. If you think you have a train to catch, there is your train.

"Even in your dreams you think you have to go on a ship. The ship is there because you make the ship and it is real to you. You people it and it travels. It has the necessary attendants, hasn't it? It is very real on its own plane of sensation. You must remember that reality is a relative term."

"I have heard and read of these things frequently," said a sitter, "but I must say it is very difficult for me to appreciate.

"It is" said Silver Birch. "But even in your world you have the illusion of time. One hour is not always the same to you; and five minutes can sometimes seem as long as one hour. That is the mental aspect of it. If you appreciated that in our world mental aspect is the reality, you will see that we are divorced from the purely mechanical aspect of time as it affects you. I think that is the best way to express it."

Another question sent in was: "Does each individual have a house of his own?"

"Yes," replied the guide, "they have houses of their own if they want them, because they desire them and they earn them. But some do not desire houses. Some prefer them built according to their own styles of architecture, some prefer to incorporate ideas of lighting which are, for example, not known to you. This is a matter of personal taste dependent upon the creative ability of the spirit concerned."

"Didn't you say," a member of the circle interposed, "that your house was dependent upon the kind of life you had lived?"

"I said," went on Silver Birch, "if you desired it and had earned it. But once you have earned it, then its style is purely a matter of taste. If you would like it open to the sky you can have it. You must remember that these things are largely controlled for a long time by individual habit. Habit is a mental attribute and it persists after death.

"People who have dwelt only in this country are accustomed to certain styles of houses and thus it is those styles in which they live because it is a habit to do so. Once they have outworn that habit they have other types of houses. This is a very wise provision which ensures continuity; it prevents shock and life is smoother and more harmonious as a result."

There is no "parliament" in the spirit world because there is no need to make laws to regulate the lives of the people who dwell there, said Silver Birch at a different sitting.

"The natural law," explained the guide, "takes care of people in the spirit world because they are confronted with it in a form which is inescapable. They no longer have physical bodies; the problem of physical life does not concern them. They are now expressing themselves in spiritual form and the natural law is in operation. There is no need for any intermediary."

The guide was asked whether there were concerts, theatres and museums in the spirit world. Their museums he said, were in the halls or buildings of learning where there are collections of varying kinds, of objects relating to earthly life throughout history, and also collections of interesting forms of spiritual life. For example, we have flowers that have not bloomed on earth. We have many other phases of natural life unknown to you. There are examples of these in the halls of learning.

“Concerts are always available because there are so many musicians, many of them masters, whose desire is that their talents should be enjoyed by the largest possible number. Theatres - there are many of varying kinds. Some are used purely for dramatic purposes, others for cultural purposes, and others for educational purposes.

“Gifts, talents and faculties which people had in your world do not end with death. Death brings them greater freedom and the extended opportunities to express those talents.”

“Are there newspapers and radio?” was the next question.

“No, we do not have radio because communication is differently used,” explained Silver Birch. “Telepathy is the common method of reaching one another. But it is possible for those who know how, to address vast numbers and to reach them, even when they are not themselves present. But it does not work on the principle of your radio.

“There are no newspapers in your earthly sense, because there is no necessity to chronicle happenings, as you do. Information is constantly being dispensed to those who should have it by the ones whose occupation it is to spread these facts. This is difficult for you to understand.

“When it is necessary for me to be told something that I do not know the thought is sent to me by the one who thinks I ought to know it. There are people engaged on the task of disseminating these thoughts. They are specially trained for it.”

“Does the same thing happen to us when we receive inspiration?” asked a member of the circle.

“It is on a different scale,” began the answer. “When you receive inspiration it is because consciously or unconsciously you are tuned in to some intelligence in our world and, for that time, you are able to receive his power, inspiration or message. Sometimes it is conscious, sometimes it is unconscious. It depends upon the circumstances.

“But in our life we are constantly receiving and transmitting thoughts. Those who are on our spiritual wavelength, that is, of like spiritual mentality, receive thoughts that we send them and transmit thoughts to us. The wavelength is determined by spiritual attainment.”

“Do people retain their earth names?” was the next question? “Is Abraham Lincoln,

for instance, still known as Abraham Lincoln in the spirit world?”

“Yes,” said Silver Birch, “as long as it is necessary for a person to be so identified. But what you must remember is that the name is not the individual; it is only the means by which he is known.”

“If someone passes on who is known to many people by a certain name, it would be very convenient for him to keep that name,” observed a sitter.

“Yes,” he was told, “as long as it is necessary for him or her to be so identified. That may take hundreds or even thousands of years. But once you have passed beyond the magnetic field of the earth, the name does not matter because you are then known for the individual that you truly are.”

“Can that be witnessed by people?”

“Yes. Once you have got beyond the earthly pull, once you have passed the stage of earthly association and reached the span of spiritual life to which you are thus entitled, you emit a light, an aura, a radiation, which indicates who and what you are. Is that hard to understand?”

“No,” said the questioner. “In our world, sometimes without speaking to a person, you are able to ascertain what kind of an individual he is.”

“Yes, it is in the aura,” commented Silver Birch. “It is like that here, but on a much intensified scale.”

Another question was: “Do they have famous men and women in the spirit world, distinct from the famous men and women of this world?”

“Most decidedly,” said the guide. “Fame comes to many people in your world through sheer birth and for no other reason. They have not won it by their life, their endeavour, or their labour. There are many, many beings unknown, unrecognised in your world, to whom the lustre of fame is accorded in our world. The soul is the indelible passport.’

“Are there books or anything equivalent in the other world?” was a further question.

“Yes, there are many, many books,” said Silver Birch. There is a duplicate of every book known to your world, and there are many other volumes of which there are no originals in your world. There are vast halls or buildings dedicated to all the arts, and literature has its place among them. It is possible to obtain knowledge of any subject in which you are interested.”

“Who prepares the books?”

“Authors, people who are specialists in the task of preparing books.”

“Are they etheric books which etheric people can pick up and read?” - “Yes!”

Then the discussion took one of those turns which throw new light on old problems.

“Could the same book be something different to somebody else?” was the question

which started it.

“No,” explained the guide, who asked, “Have you ever dreamed you were reading a book?”

“I have not,” was the answer, “but I can quite imagine what the experience is like.”

“Would it be a real book?” asked Silver Birch. “No,” he was told.

“Supposing,” the guide went on, “you never woke, that dreams were your constant reality and you had no waking experience with which to compare your dream life, everything that transpired in dreams would be real to you and all that had happened in waking life would now become the shadow. All the mental processes utilised during the dream state are engaged in to a much greater intensity in the worlds beyond death. As those mental states are the reality of the people who dwell in those worlds, the states are as tangible to them as material things are to you in your world.”

Silver Birch has described something of the beauties of the spirit world, which he declares we visit frequently in our sleep, although most of us cannot remember our experiences on waking.

“When you have tasted and enjoyed with your full consciousness all that my world has to offer, you will realise that it is the love we bear for you that makes us come back to work amongst you,” he said.

“You have not tasted the joys of the world of spirit. There is nothing in your world of matter with which you can compare the life of the spirit, freed from the trammels of the flesh, escaped from the prison of the body of matter, with liberty to go where you will, to see your thoughts take shape, to follow out the desires of your heart, to be freed from the troubles of money. No, you have not tasted the joys of the world of spirit.

“You who are encased in matter do not yet comprehend beauty as it can be. You have not seen our light, colour, scenery, trees, birds, rivers, streams, mountains, flowers - and yet your world fears death.

“Death strikes terror into your hearts. But you will only begin to live when you are ‘dead’. Now you live, but in reality you are almost dead. So many are dead to the things of the spirit. The little life-force flickers in their puny bodies, but no spiritual things can find any response within them. But gradually we make progress. Gradually the force of the spirit increases in strength all over your world of matter. Gradually darkness retreats, as it must when confronted by the light of spiritual truth.

“There are no words to compare the life in your world of matter with the life in the world of spirit. We who are ‘dead’ know so much more of life than you do.

“This is the world where the artist finds all his dreams come true, where the painter and the poet realise their ambition, where genius has full power of expression,

where the repressions of earth are swept away and all gifts and talents are used in the service of one another.

“This is the world where there are no clumsy words to express inspiration, but where thought is the living language and reveals itself with lightning rapidity.

“This is the world where we have no money to worry us, where there is no competition, no driving of the weaker to the wall, where the strong are strong because they have something to give to those less fortunate than themselves.

“We have no unemployment, we have no slums, we have no selfishness. We have no sects, we have only one religion. We have no sacred books, only the operation of the divine laws to instruct us.

“And the nearer you get to the belt of matter, the more clumsy and difficult it is for the spirit to express itself.

“To die is not tragic. To live in your world is tragic. To see the garden of the Great Spirit choked with the weeds of selfishness and greed and avarice, that is tragedy.

“To die is to enjoy freedom of the spirit, which has been imprisoned behind the bars of the material body. Is it tragic to be released from suffering, for the soul to come into its own? Is it tragic to see wonders of colour, to hear music that does not belong to material expression? Do you call it tragic to express yourself in a body that has no pain, to be able to roam all over the world of matter in a flash and to taste the beauties of the spirit life too?

“There is not in your world one artist who could capture with his paints some of the glories of my world. There is not one musician who could record some of the glories of the music sphere with your notes. There is not one writer who could describe in physical words the beauty of parts of this world.

“You see all around you the manifestations of the Great Spirit, as the dawn of life sweeps over your surroundings again in its cycle, and you marvel at the beauty of the blossom and the fragrance of the flowers, and you say: ‘How great is the handiwork of the Great Spirit.’

“And yet, that which you see is but a very, very pale reflection of the beauties that we have in our world of spirit. We have flowers such as you have never seen, we have colours such as your eye has never beheld, we have scenes and forests, we have birds and plants; we have streams and mountains. You have nothing to compare them with. And you will be able to enjoy them, for, even though you will be ghosts, you will be real ones.

“You come to our world now, but you do not remember. You visit the spirit world every night. That is your preparation. Otherwise, it would be such a shock when you come here to start your real life in earnest. When you pass on, you will remember your visits.

“You will then be freed from the limitation of the body and you will be able to

express to the full all the consciousness which has been released during your sleep. In its new expression, it will bring to you all the memories that you have; the memories of all the experiences you have enjoyed.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

MAGIC WEB OF WORDS

Spontaneity is one of the characteristic qualities of Silver Birch. It is not that he is never at a loss for words - many people can spawn words in a never-ending stream. But do they make sense? Are they consistent? Do they rise above banality, repetition, circumlocution and, for the most part, just plain rubbish?

Silver Birch is a master orator who draws upon some source of unfailing inspiration. Whatever the question, his answer is delivered unhesitatingly and is packed with what can perhaps best be described as “cosmic common sense.” One feels that this great sage of the spheres has never been tongue-tied or tricked into the ignominy of contradiction.

Humble and self-effacing when he could be permitted a little pride, he goes on weaving his magic web of words and philosophy in a verbal atmosphere of quiet dignity, gentle wisdom and reverent dedication.

Asked a question on a general topic his answer will be one that is applicable to any community or individual, in any age. For instance, replying to the question “Can you say something about the right use of leisure?” he replied:

“The right use of leisure should be devoted to the cultivation of the gifts of the mind and of the spirit. That is important, for already most people devote sufficient time to the requirements of the physical body. They concern themselves with the food that is required to sustain them and give them energy, although they are not always cognisant of those laws of health which would enable the body to be the vital organism it should be. But few remember that the mind and spirit require development, and these are the ones who go through life spiritually deaf, dumb and blind.

“The vast inexhaustible riches of the spirit are unknown to them. The beauty which could fill their mind and spirit has not yet been made known to them. They know little of the many arts, the cultivation of which would bring them inner peace and a greater appreciation of the larger side of life.

“Then, above all, is the cultivation of the spirit itself which can be accomplished in the quietness of the individual, where he can learn to attune himself to all that power that is round and about him; where he can learn to harmonise his mind with the great minds of the larger life; where he can learn to become a better receptacle for the inspiration and wisdom, for the knowledge and truth, for all the learning that is awaiting him. from the infinite storehouse, the Great Spirit.”

“Will you explain intuition?” once inquired someone.

“Yes, I can explain it in one sentence - the prompting of the spirit,” replied the guide. “Intuition is the means by which the spirit becomes aware of itself; it outpaces the processes of normal earthly reasoning. Intuition accomplishes at lightning speed what normally you would reach after much deliberation. Intuition is that process of attunement during which you receive that prompting which you would reach after much time and thought on the same subject.”

The simple humanity of the guide was revealed in his reply to the question, “Is it unwise for coloured people and white people to marry and have offspring?”

His direct answer was: “I am a coloured man. Need I say more? Surely your world must be in error when it thinks that superiority can be determined by pigmentation, by the colour of the skin. Superiority is attained only through service. There is no other road. You are not greater or lesser in spirit because your skin is white, brown, red or black. The colour of your skin does not reflect the development of your soul. Your world tries to judge eternal problems by physical standards, but there is only the one eternal standard - that is the standard of the spirit.

“All races and all colours are part of the Great Spirit of all life Who provides harmony in the perfect mixture of all hues. Look at nature’s handiwork and realise that no matter how profuse or variegated are the colours of flowers in a vast garden, never is the note of disharmony or colour discord struck anywhere. When the colours are blended among men, you will be emerging towards the perfect race.”

“Is it fair in the present development of human society for half-caste children to be brought into the world?” asked a sitter.

“Prejudice must be broken down, error must be fought,” answered the guide. “Truth will advance, however slowly and painfully, because it is truth. That which is worth having is worth achieving. Achievement comes through struggle. The prize is to him who dares and conquers, not to those who fear and are tempted to shirk their difficulties. Life is a school. Through hardship and struggle, striving and difficulty, adverse circumstances, storms and tempests, the spirit finds itself.”

One of the finest spontaneous answers to a question put to him by circle members came when Silver Birch was asked: “If you were requested to broadcast on the truth of Spiritualism what would you say?” He replied:

“I would begin by explaining that I am one of those whom your world of matter regards as dead but that the beliefs of your world are founded on fallacy. Life cannot die. Life continues because it is part of the great, eternal, creative life-force. I would ask listeners to put on one side all the misconceptions of their inherited prejudices and to approach the subject of Survival with simplicity of heart and mind, seeking only to know the truth.

“I would appeal to them to be tolerant and sympathetic, and not to worry about

what others have taught, but to seek for themselves. I would cite as witnesses the many all over the world who know that there is a life that continues beyond the tomb because they themselves have spoken with what are called the dead. Then, speaking for myself, I would say that I was one of those who, having completed my allotted earthly span and passed, many years ago, beyond the veil of mortal life, had decided to return to illumine your darkened world and teach it the truths of the spirit which have been buried for too long.

“I would outline some of those simple truths in simple language and ask whether those who listened thought that in any way they offended their reason or insulted their intelligence. I have no vested interest, I would tell them; I have no money to earn; I have no job to defend. I have nothing to gain. I come back after many, many years in a world of spirit to tell you what I know. It is for you to listen.

“I tell you that you are immortal, deathless, that the ones for whom you have mourned, for whom the tears of sorrow have streamed down your cheeks, stand silently by your side - silent to you because you cannot hear them, but their voices have cried out in anguish for a long time in their striving to reach you.

You are the dead, the dead who are unconscious of life as it really exists. You have closed your eyes to all the beauties of the Great Spirit’s universe. You have allowed yourselves to register only the infinitesimal fraction of an earthly world. All around you the whole atmosphere teems with a multitudinous life. Your own beloved are there, and behind them the serried ranks of the immortals, men and women from ages past, who, having served your world of matter when they were with you, are still anxious to offer you comradeship, guidance, fellowship and the wisdom of their extended experience.

“If you prefer blindness, keep your eyes closed. If you prefer deafness, keep your ears closed. But if you are wise, you will open the windows of your souls, so that you can become aware of that mighty, vast power of the spirit which will strengthen and encourage you and make you know how life can be lived and enjoyed to the full.

“You are the children of a Great Spirit, a Great Spirit whose wisdom and love have fashioned the whole universe. The ties that bind you to that Great Spirit can be strengthened by your understanding. If churches stand in the way of your receiving that knowledge, then discard the churches. If men are the obstacles, then discard the men. If books are the obstacles, discard the books.

“Retire into the silence of your own being; forget the world of matter with all its harsh discord. Tune in to the subtle, delicate vibrations of the teeming spirit life around you, and you will know that you can transcend the limitations of the fleshly body. Awaken to knowledge; awaken to understanding. You need not be a prisoner; you can leave the jail of ignorance and live in the light of spiritual freedom.”

“That is what I would say.

CHAPTER EIGHT

POWERS OF THE MIND

A Fleet Street Editor, with some experience of Spiritualism, put questions to Silver Birch on the difference between thought and inspiration. This is how the guide answered:

“You who live in the world of matter are most unoriginal creatures. You do not, except very seldom, create anything. You are receiving stations and also transmitting stations. Thoughts come to you; they lodge within you; you add to their wings and send them forth where others receive them. The thought that comes to you is not the same as when it leaves you; your personality has quickened it, or slowed it down, enriched it, or impoverished it, made it more beautiful, or more ugly, given it new life, or perhaps vitiated it. But over and above all that, you can, when you attune yourself, receive positive inspiration from those of like mentality to yourself.

“When people ‘die,’ as you call it, they come to our world, but all the richness of soul and mind which is theirs cannot die. It is divine, infinite, and like all things divine and infinite, it cannot perish. All the qualities of soul and mind continue to grow, to unfold, to develop and to mature in our world. The mere fact that you possess these great qualities of the soul means that when you reach this world of ours, you soon desire to render service to those less fortunate than you. You find, or strive to find, people like yourself.

“If you were a poet, you seek a poet, a musician, you seek a musician, like interests wherever possible, so that you can give freely all you have learned in your new world. The difficulty is to achieve the process of attunement. It is not our fault that inspiration is limited to brief flashes. If the laws that regulate conditions between the two states of life were perfectly understood, if the people of your world were to rid themselves of the many prejudices and superstitions which create barriers to a full and free communication, this wisdom of the infinite could be poured through human instruments into your world. It always depends on having an instrument to receive what we give and the ability of these instruments to attune themselves to receive the highest that can be given. All inspiration, all wisdom, all truth, all knowledge is dependent upon your capacity to receive.”

Explaining, on another occasion, how spirit influence is brought to bear on mediums, the guide told a group of his earthly friends: “We work in two ways. First, there is the hard part, that is, when you have to make your influence felt in your world. You do not know how difficult that is - to start off without any touch with a world of matter and then, by sheer mental exercise, concentration, projection of thought and idea focused on one person so that he or she can be influenced, unconsciously, as far as they are concerned, so that they think it is their own idea at work, to be moved into that place where the first link can be made.

“That is the hard task, and it takes years and years and years. It takes so long, sometimes, that in my case I had to start even before the instrument was born. Then having done that, the next part is not so difficult, because once you have an instrument, a medium, a channel, and you can express yourself, however poorly, it has at least forged the magnetic link, and that cannot be broken.

“From that beginning the amount of influence can be increased; the funnel of the spirit can become larger and larger; and the only limitation is the capacity of the instrument, for that is always the restriction placed upon the amount of cooperation with us. In all these cases, wherever there be a fault, the fault does not lie with us but with the means at our command. When people say, ‘Why does not the world of spirit do this or that?’ surely the answer is that the instruments make it possible or impossible.

“After that magnetic link has been made it is much simpler, because through our world the power of the spirit can reach you. If, of your own free will, you begin to allow your inner self to develop, you allow that part of you which is the eternal reality to begin to find expression here instead of waiting until you have passed through the gate of death.

“Then the association becomes closer and richer and more effective as time goes by. After that, it is not so difficult to bring together the varying people whose meeting is part of a plan. It is the first step that is the hardest.”

The part played in trance communication by the medium’s mind was explained by Silver Birch on one occasion. It began with his comment that he had a little difficulty in controlling because the medium was falling asleep. “That is no good for me,” he said.

“Why is that?” asked a sitter.

“I must have control over all that regulates the body,” replied Silver Birch.

“Could you not have control if the medium were asleep?” the sitter asked.

“No,” said the guide. “Because I must use his subconscious mind to direct his body, and it becomes quiescent in sleep. Trance is not the same as sleep.”

“But does not the medium go outside of his body in both cases?” the sitter asked.

“No, it is not a question of the medium being inside or outside,” replied the guide

“You are dealing with consciousness and its functioning, and that is not in or out.

“I thought the medium’s consciousness stood aside,” was the sitter’s comment.

“Yes, but that is a temporary separation from his physical body,” said Silver Birch.

“It is a willing surrender, instead of the negation which sleep is. All mediumship is conscious co-operation between our world and yours. There are examples of unconscious co-operation when the faculties are stimulated for a time, but where there is a real work to be done between a guide and an instrument, the co-operation

must be a conscious one, a willingness on the part of the medium to take part in all the machinery associated with the development of mediumship.”

“Haven’t there been cases where the medium has been used in his sleep and trance messages have come through him?” the guide was asked.

“There might have been,” he said, “but it is a reversal of the process which should normally be used.”

“It is possible that the medium agreed in his sleep to be so used,” remarked the sitter.

“Yes, but as you know, we always defer to the wishes of the instrument,” said Silver Birch, “unless they are unimportant, and then we suggest what should be done. But of course this body does not belong to us; it belongs to the tenant who inhabits it. If he cares to surrender the lease to us for a little while, that is well and good, but to rob him of his tenancy without his permission is contrary to the law. It is a natural surrender, with a respect on both sides for the forces which will inhabit the body.

Asked to tell the circle something about the employment of the subconscious mind in trance communication, Silver Birch said:

“There is much misconception about it. Very briefly, mind has many functions. Man is an expression of consciousness, and consciousness is the all-important thing. Consciousness is individual life; individual life is consciousness. Wherever there is consciousness there is individual spirit; and wherever there is individual spirit there is consciousness. You are not aware of the fullness of your consciousness in the physical world in which you live because your consciousness is much larger - to use a term that you will understand - than the physical body through which it is trying to express itself. The smaller cannot contain the larger; the lesser cannot hold the greater.

“And so throughout all your earthly life you express but a mere fraction of that larger consciousness which you will come to recognise in the days after you have passed through the gate of death. Even then you will not immediately become aware of all your consciousness, for it is only through evolution, even in our world, that more and more of the consciousness can be registered through its vehicle.

“Your mind, which is the director of your intelligence, the controller of all your individual life, does not function actively and consciously for every requirement of your physical body. So many of the functions which are necessary for your life in this world are automatic and mechanical. Once the consciousness has arranged the muscles or the nerves, or the cells, or the tissues, and their co-ordination necessary to perform that task, it relegates their repetition to the subconscious part of your mind.

“For example, when you eat you automatically open your mouth, which means the interplay of many nerves and forces before the jaws can move. Nervous impulses

have to be sent from the brain, which is the physical counterpart of the mind, and then your teeth have to open and similar instructions have to be given by the brain. All that is automatic. You do not, every time you pick up a morsel of food, deliberately go through all the processes necessary before you can eat. You do them automatically; the subconscious mind does them for you. When you were a baby you had to learn them one by one; now it is done unthinkingly; purely mechanically.

“You will find that most of the control, therefore, of your bodily - and, to a large extent, your mental - functions have been relegated to the subconscious mind, which is a department, the basement, of your conscious mind. You read a book and you stop and ask yourself what you think of it, and the reply automatically flashed into your mind. It is your subconscious mind which registers the answer for you, having learned through association with your consciousness the reason that you employ. You hear a speech, and if at any time you are asked, ‘What do you think of it?’ even unthinkingly you provide the answer.

“When, however, you are confronted with problem outside of your ordinary experience, which have not been performed or solved before by the subconscious mind then your consciousness has to start work, because a new track is involved. But, with these exceptions, where you have to employ original thinking - if such a phrase can be used in that connection - most of your life is relegate to your subconscious mind. It acts as storekeeper; it takes charge of all the records of our memory; it controls most of your living processes; and therefore, from many aspects, it is the most important part of you.

“When it comes to mediumship, it stands to reason, does it not, that where an intelligence which is foreign to the intelligence which has expressed itself through the bodily organism has to function, it is easier for it to take control of the subconscious mind, which is already accustomed to acting on the directions from the conscious mind. It is used to taking orders; it is used to having tasks assigned to it and performing them without interruption, save if anything goes wrong.

“Nearly all forms of mediumship involve the use of the subconscious mind of the medium, for that is the secret of his personality. There, embedded in its storehouse, are all the facets of his individuality. In trance mediumship, what the guide has first of all to learn to avoid is that in controlling his instrument he so takes charge that he does not get from the instrument the usual automatic responses that the medium does, when his consciousness calls on his subconsciousness. That is the whole keynote.”

“Has he to still the subconscious mind?” asked a sitter.

“No,” said Silver Birch. “The guide has to harmonise his personality with the medium’s to achieve such a perfect blending that he superimposes his own thought through being in co-operation. At the same time he has to be master of that subconsciousness which, the moment it gets the association of another directing

intelligence, begins to send up impulses, just as when you depress the keys of a typewriter letters move up. That is what the guide has to learn, to avoid that happening.

“You can conceive that, as you are dealing with a living being, with an individual with ideas of his own, with prejudices, likes and dislikes, you are bound in all forms of control to get some aspects of the medium. It is impossible, as I have told you, ever entirely to eliminate the medium. The degree of elimination is dependent on the success in blending the guide’s personality with that of his instrument. If it were possible to effect a perfect fusion, then there would be no subconscious interference by the subconscious.

“It is not that you eliminate the medium - you cannot do that - but you have to blend. That is what development of mediumship is. That is why you sit in circles. That is why you have séances, so that the power that is gathered from all those who assemble is used to aid the blending. That is why harmony is essential. That is why, if there is friction among sitters, it is impossible to get harmony between the guide and the medium. You are dealing with mental forces all the time and, though there is nothing visible to show, all the unseen thoughts, impulses, wills, desires, wishes of all the sitters have an effect on the communications that take place. The more proficient the guide, the more experienced, the greater the state of harmony between him and his instrument, the less will be the subconscious interference.”

“Is it better from your point of view, to choose a medium whose desires and feelings are more or less the same as those of the guide?” asked a sitter.

“It all depends,” replied the spirit. “That is one of the debatable subjects, and there is difference of opinion even in our world. You must remember that we are human beings, and we do not agree on every detail in the processes involved in communication.

“There are some who say that more success is achieved by using an ignorant medium, one who knows so little that his subconsciousness can present no barrier. To that, others reply that his mere ignorance is a barrier because it creates a wall which has to be broken down. The same school argues that where you have a well-filled mind you have a better instrument on which to play, for greater music is possible from an instrument created by craftsmanship than a cheap instrument that you purchase for a few pence in your world, that the better the instrument the better the results our world can get from it. I incline to that belief.”

“Why should a medium with more knowledge be better than an ignorant one?” asked a sitter. “Is it not a question of character as well?”

“I am talking about trance mediumship,” replied the guide. “Character is a separate issue which involves other factors. I am referring to the actual processes, or, if you like to use the word, the mechanics of communication. I will put it in a very simple way. A violinist will obtain better results from a Stradivarius than he will from a

cheap fiddle because the beauty and quality of that instrument enable him to produce better results. The other is a limitation to him.

“The character of the medium has a great effect on the quality of the communicator who can register through him, and, in physical manifestations, on the quality of the results obtained. The lower the character - and I am using these words only in terms of comparison - of the physical medium, the poorer, for example, is the ectoplasm that is used, not poorer physically but from a spiritual point of view. Character determines the quality of the power of attraction between the spirit and the medium. It would be impossible, for example, for the ones you recognise as saints, because of their high spiritual status, to manifest through a medium of very low character, because there is no point of contact.”

“With physical mediumship the subconscious mind also seems to have an effect,” remarked a sitter. “Can you explain that?”

“The focal point of every séance is the medium,” said Silver Birch. You are not using a telephone, you are not using a telegraph pole, you are not using a morse key. You are using a living instrument, and the qualities of his life impregnate the communications.

“It is well that it is so. If it were possible, which it is not, to reduce all communication between these two states of life to a purely mechanical apparatus, I know that most of the beauty and sacredness would be lost. At every séance the medium is the focal point. You cannot eliminate him. It is all his qualities that are being used.

Even when a trumpet is raised or a materialisation is formed, the foundation comes from the medium, and whatever qualities the medium possesses, in some form or another they are conveyed in the results of the séance.”

“Why is it that the heart and pulse beats alter when a spirit takes control?” the guide was asked at another sitting. “Are they, as a rule, the heart and pulse beats of the spirit?”

“When spirits are controlling the medium,” he replied, “they are registering through the subconscious mind and automatically their consciousness regulates the primary functions of the body, which are the beat of the heart and the pulse, the temperature and the circulation of the blood. That is why you notice a change of breathing when control is being effected. It is the transitory stage. But what happens is that the guide is reproducing, by association with matter, his own personality as it was expressed in a body. For example, I use a Red Indian body and thus, through the medium, the pulse beat is that of the Red Indian body, because it is easier to take all that consciousness belonging to the astral body and transfer it rather than to start from the beginning.

Answering the question, “Who or what are our guides?” Silver Birch said:

“Sometimes they are those who belong to the family line. Sometimes there is no tie of earthly relationship but instead there is a spiritual kinship based upon mutual attraction because there is some task that can be performed. They are not restricted to the members of race or nation, for race and nationality do not persist after the grave when the habits of earth have died away. There are no races or nations in the souls; only in the bodies.”

Some idea of the work done by guides has been given by Silver Birch. It arose when he was asked, “Can you tell us how the guides are selected?” The spirit teacher answered: “Some volunteer because they are aware of tasks to be performed in your world. Others who have reached a maturity of spiritual growth are approached by those who have taken upon themselves the task of helping humanity.

“I was asked - I did not choose in the first place. But when I was asked whether I would volunteer to do so I readily assented and I can tell you that a very black picture was painted of the difficulties that would have to be surmounted before any progress could be made. Yet those difficulties, to a large extent, have been conquered and the obstacles that still stand in the way are very small compared with those that have been removed.”

“And those who volunteer, as distinct from those who are approached, do they have to satisfy some examiners who test their fitness to become guides?” was the next question.

“It is not quite in that sense,” answered Silver Birch, “but something very like it. Our world is very highly organised, it is far more organised than ever you have thought was possible, and to perform this task requires a miniature organisation. You know by name some of the members of this band, who incidentally are a most retiring assortment of people, because each time I seek to thrust them forward, they always stand back and say, ‘You go ahead.’

“Now you cannot get your group, your band, unless it is attracted to you for the work’s sake and you have reached that degree of evolution which gives you the power of attraction. In our world what you are determines what you do. It is your spirit that is the dominant reality. There are no masks, no disguises, no subterfuges, no cheats; there is nothing hidden; all is known.

CHAPTER NINE

DEATH CANNOT SEVER

Never allow fear to find a lodgment within your being. It is a negative quality which destroys, vitiates and saps. It impairs your judgment; it clouds your reason; it prevents you from seeing issues clearly. There is no problem that comes to any soul which you are incapable of solving. There is no difficulty that you cannot conquer - if you would but allow the latent divinity to rise to the surface.

“The people in your world have, with very few exceptions, not yet begun to live. They are expressing only infinitesimal portions of the power which is resident within them. In supreme moments of crisis or emergency they call on that power and it gives them added strength, added courage, added wisdom. But that power can be tapped all the time. It can give you health to master disease, direction in times of uncertainty, guidance when you are perplexed, strength when you are weary and vision when you are blind. It is there for you to express it.

In such powerful language does Silver Birch combat an insidious foe. “Fear is born of the darkness of man’s superstition,” he declared, when someone asked him, “You say we should cast out fear, but is not fear a necessary part of our equipment?” He continued:

“It is the relic of the days of early evolution when primitive man did not understand the processes of nature and attributed to them powers that were beyond the natural. He was afraid of the night; he was afraid of the sun; he was afraid of the storm, the lightning and the thunder; he was afraid of the tempest; he was afraid of all natural phenomena because the explanation of them did not come within his mental orbit.

“But you are no longer children of a primitive era. You boast that you are highly civilised, that you have grown to man’s full, proud estate. Why, then, should you have fear, knowing that you are part of the Great Spirit of all life, that you are co-sharers in the processes of evolution, that you possess the power which shaped the whole universe and gave it direction and purpose, that you possess the power that is responsible for every facet of life, the power that filled the whole of the world with all that it contains? Why is fear essential when you know what you are and can be? No, fear is wrong, for fear makes you afraid and you should not be afraid. You should live in the sunlight of knowledge based on the confidence that you are infinite spirits and nothing can hurt or damage for ever the eternity which is yours.

Perhaps the greatest fear known to man is that of death. There is no horror comparable to that which numbs the mind when an imaginative individual contemplates the possibility of total extinction. And there is no grief to measure up to that which comes to an unenlightened soul when someone who was truly and tenderly loved ceases to breathe forever.

“But do, please, try to understand this,” - it is Silver Birch talking - “death is not a tragedy to those who die; it is only a tragedy to those who are left behind. To go from darkness to light is not something over which you should grieve.

“If you grieve, you are in reality grieving over your loss and not for one who has in truth become enfranchised. He is better off. He will no longer suffer all the ills of the human body. He will not be subjected to the ravages of wasting diseases. He will unfold all the gifts with which he has been endowed, and will express them free from any thwartings and will be able to give a larger service to those who require it.

“You miss the accustomed presence, you sigh for the physical body that you no

longer see, but the reality is always there, although it is not palpable to you. Look beyond the world of sense, beyond the five crude, clumsy windows of the soul, and try to gather some of the wisdom that comes with the knowledge of spiritual reality.”

“Should you be sad because they are freed from pain, from old age, from tiredness and weariness?” he asked on another occasion. “Should you be sad because they escaped from darkness into the light? Should you be sad because they can now unfold the talents with which they have been endowed? Should you be sad because they are now free to enjoy the pursuits that are natural to them?”

“No, your sorrow is selfish. You are mourning your own loss, you are thinking in terms of what you are missing and what you will have to endure - a life of loneliness, bereft of love that has enriched it. But you are wrong. There need be no loneliness if you would but make yourself familiar with the truth and allow the scales of ignorance to drop away from your eyes so that you could behold the radiant form of the one you love.

“Death cannot part you from the one you love, for love will always claim its own. Your sorrow is based on ignorance. With knowledge you could be sure that the one you love is closer than ever he or she has been before. You could taste some of the joy that comes with the appreciation of an understanding of spiritual reality.

“Do not mourn because the caterpillar has become a beautiful butterfly. Do not weep because the cage has been opened and the bird has been set free. Rejoice, and know that the enfranchised soul has found liberty and that, if you would but unfold the powers that the Great Spirit has given you, you could share some of the new beauty and joy which is theirs. You could understand the plan of death and realise that death is but a steppingstone, a door through which you enter into the larger freedom of the realms of the spirit.”

A vivid description of death as part of the cycle of life was given by Silver Birch when, one Easter-time, he drew a comparison with the seasons of the year.

“Think of the ‘miracle’ of the seasons,” he said, “the eternal circle for ever revolving with unbroken constancy – the snows of winter, when all life sleeps; the herald of spring, when life awakens; the fullness of summer, when life is revealed in all its beauty; autumn, when the voice of nature is hushed and preparation is made for sleep ere the period of refreshment comes upon it.

“You are about to witness nature’s great revelation - spring, Easter, resurrection - when the new life makes itself visible all over your world, the life that has been sleeping, the life that has retreated into the darkness of mother earth, there to find peace and quietness in the darkness. Soon you will see the rising sap, the bud, the foliage, the leaf and then the flower. The tiny aconites raise their heads and a thousand voices announce the birth of new life.

“You will be reminded of the old pagans, the ‘uncivilised’ savages, whose religion was founded on the rituals of nature, who saw in the seasons the divine drama, who

constructed from the movements of the stars and the planets the lives of the gods, the powers that watched over them; who paid tribute to the laws which controlled their life, who recognised that the greatest season of all was spring, when birth came upon your world.

“The cycle is repeated in every human life. The pageant of nature is duplicated in every human soul. First there is the spring, with the awakening consciousness; the summer, when man’s powers rise to their highest; autumn, when life begins to wane; and winter, when sleep comes to the weary, tired soul. But even after the winter of the physical life, spring comes to the spirit as it awakens in another world to continue that eternal cycle. Take from nature this message, and be assured that the laws which have never failed will continue to operate in your case and in the case of every human life.”

CHAPTER TEN

RELIGION’S TRUE PURPOSE

Asked for his definition of religion, Silver Birch replied: “Religion is to serve the Great Spirit by serving His children. Religion has little to do with the conventional ideas of your world. Religion is that which enables the Great Spirit in you to be revealed in your life. Religion is that which increases the tie between you and the Great Spirit and between you and His other children. Religion is that which makes you go out into your world and give service wherever you can. Religion is service, and service is religion.

“All else does not matter. When the physical body falls away all the creeds over which human beings have for so long fought and striven are shown to be empty and vain, meaningless and purposeless, for they have not aided the growth of the soul by one iota. The growth of the soul is only increased by service, for as you forget self in the service of others so your own soul grows in stature and in strength.

“There have been for too long too many so-called religions, each with a variation of a message. The things which they hold most dear are in reality of no value. The things for which they have, in the past, caused blood to flow, tortured, maimed and burned, do not increase the spirit of man by one inch. They have divided mankind into opposite camps; they have created barriers; they have caused needless differences in countries; and in families. They have caused disputes; they have done everything that stands for disruption and disharmony. They have failed to unite the children of the Great Spirit. That is why we care not for buildings and conventional religion. We are not concerned with what a man calls himself. It is what he does that matters.”

One of the main constituents of orthodox religion is prayer. What is the object of prayer? Here is one answer - Silver Birch’s:

“Not to address requests that are already known to Omnipotence; not to acquaint

the Great Spirit with facts already known, even before they are expressed; not to ask for mere petitions which you may not, when they are answered, deserve, for, after all, are you capable of deciding what is best for your own development? No! The object of true prayer is to obtain a closer unity with the Great Spirit and all the powers of that spirit, so that they may flood and suffuse your being in a far richer manner than ever they have done before.

“True prayer is a spiritual exercise which compels introspection, so that looking within you become conscious of your own weaknesses and imperfections, but also conscious of your innate strength. Thus, prayer draws you nearer to the source of all being and stimulates and inspires you to strive to reach higher stages of attainment.”

When asked how the spirit world regards prayer, the guide answered: “To appreciate prayer, you must realise its purpose. The mere mouthing of words, the mere repetition of a formula achieves nothing. These well worn tracks in the atmosphere attract nobody; neither do they create any vibrant forces. We are not interested in stereotyped phrases; for there is no sincerity behind them and the one who utters them usually does so with indifference, for he has long ceased to ponder on the meaning of the words that are repeated almost as by an automaton. There is, however, some value in real prayer. It is never suggested that whilst you live in your world any action of the mind can be a substitute for the labours that you have to perform.

“Prayer is not intended to be a refuge of the coward who seeks to escape his obligations. Prayer is not a substitute for the work that you have to do. Prayer is not a means by which you can escape your responsibilities. Prayer is not a means of outwitting the laws of the Great Spirit. No prayer can do that, neither can it by one iota make any alteration in the unbreakable sequence of cause and effect. You can disregard all prayers that do not spring from a heart which is willing to serve and which is conscious of its obligations and its duties. Having disregarded all those, there are the prayers which, because they are a psychic or spiritual exercise, set into motion certain vibrations which bring responses. Those responses are not necessarily the ones which the man who makes the prayer expects, but they are the natural result of the vibrations he has created.

“If you have faced honestly, fairly and squarely all the problems and difficulties that beset you; if you have tried within the limits of your own power to find a solution and you have failed, then you have a perfect right to ask that some higher power, some greater soul, should give you light in your hour of perplexity. And you will get that guidance, you will get that light, for those who are round and about you, those who see with the eyes of the spirit, know the conditions of your own soul. They know, for example, whether you are honest or not.

“Then there is the prayer of those who desire to effect a more complete harmony with the spiritual forces of life, the prayer of the soul which yearns to overcome the barriers imposed by the physical body and seeks to claim its own. Those prayers

must be answered, for their mere exercise is enabling the spirit gradually to acquire its rightful heritage. Always when you speak of prayer, you must differentiate between the kinds of prayer to which you are referring.

“Now I come to what is called the Lord’s Prayer I immediately say that no stereotype prayer has any value for mankind, that the mere act of formality robs it of any potency that originally it may have possessed. It may serve as a useful formula, but it cannot help you in any other way. The Great Spirit is perfect Law. It is not necessary to besiege the Great Spirit with requests which you can answer. Then you must remember, too, that many years have rolled by since the days when the Nazarene is supposed to have uttered it. Man has grown and evolved and realises far more about life in many of its ramifications. Not quite in that form was it expressed by the Nazarene, but it was clothed in the language which was applicable to the people of his day.

“Now you know that the Great Spirit is not in heaven - being the perfect law the Great Spirit pervades all space, all life; there is no aspect of life in the mighty universe of which the perfect law is not cognisant. The Great Spirit is no more in the highest heaven than the Great Spirit is in the lowest hell. The Great Spirit is universal and is manifested through every phase of universal activity. There is no necessity to address petitions announcing that the kingdom of the Great Spirit will come; that will happen, but as to when it will happen depends upon the labour of those who are cooperating with the power of the spirit and who seek to advance its coming. That it will come is inevitable, but whether that coming is hastened or delayed depends upon the work that people in your world are able to do.”

Prayers for fine weather or for rain are common in orthodox churches. Members of the circle were discussing prayers to make the sun shine when a sinner asked: “What would God have to do to make fine weather suddenly? How many tons of pressure over Iceland would He have to move, and how would He do it?”

“I have been asked before about these days of prayer,” said Silver Birch, “and the Great Spirit is not pressed when you suddenly decide to petition Him in mass for The Great Spirit, being the Great Spirit, is familiar with the needs of all His children before He is acquainted with that fact in places which are called cathedrals and churches.

“Prayer does not consist in the fact that large numbers of people gather together and listen to set words or to specially devised compositions. Prayer cannot alter the operation of the natural law. Prayer cannot interfere with the sequence of cause and effect. Man does not possess that power to interrupt what is a mathematical certainty - that effect follows cause with unalterable precision.

“Prayer has value as an exercise of the spirit, when the individual, conscious of his own limitations and, paradoxically, his innate strength, tries to release that flow of latent energy within his own being to inspire and impel him to greater deeds.

Prayer, when it is truly prayer and thus an exercise of the spirit, is a means by which man's spirit releases itself from some of earth's thralldom and finds a greater manifestation. Thus man makes himself more receptive to higher forces and becomes his own vehicle for the answer of his own prayer, that it, by desiring to serve he makes himself worth of greater inspiration.

"Now that is how I understand the value of prayer. But mass supplications to alter natural law cannot have any effect.

Asked what was the use of official days of prayer, Silver Birch replied: "Prayer is not official or unofficial. It is not fixed by days or nights. True prayer cannot be commanded by any source that is outside the individual.

"There is no value in mechanical prayer, in prayers said by rote. Those who meet from time to time because they have been commanded to do so, or because it is their habit, and read, or have read to them, words that sometimes are so familiar that they make no imprint on their minds - these do not place themselves any nearer the Great Spirit. The Great Spirit is aware of all your needs. He knows the unspoken desires of your heart; there is no need to petition Him in large numbers.

"True prayer does not consist in the words that are expressed in public assembly; true prayer does not consist in words at all. True prayer is the aspiration of the soul which recognises that it is a fragment of a much larger whole and it seeks to unite itself; it seeks to draw nearer and nearer to that power which fashioned it and of which it is a part.

"True prayer is accomplished by the individual when he is by himself, when his soul yearns and desires to attune and harmonise itself with the rhythm of life, with the creative forces which are around and about it, so that in doing so the individual may fit himself for larger service. True prayer is a means of introspection where the individual, conscious of his divinity is also conscious of all his shortcomings and seeks so to utilise his latent gifts that he may truly be an instrument of the power which gave him life and birth.

"These things cannot be accomplished by official methods, by displays or ceremonies. They can only be accomplished in the silence of the soul, in that silence which is pregnant with meaning and possibility to all who are sincere in their desire to seek nothing for self, but to serve others."

The guide's views on prayer would not be complete without one or two examples of some of the prayers uttered by Silver Birch himself. Firstly, an invocation:

Great White Spirit, we strive to reveal the perfect love which is behind the perfect law. Throughout all the centuries men have tried to visualise Thee and their conceptions have been based upon their shortcomings, their limitations, their restrictions.

"They have caught faint glimpses of the supernal wisdom that directs universal life

and have sought to translate this transcendental power into terms which they could comprehend. They visualised Thy character in terms of a human being, with all the weaknesses, faults and passions that are common to all mortals. They conceived a personal deity who intervened in order to show divine favour or wrath. Even with the growth of knowledge throughout the centuries the picture that is painted of the Creator of the whole universe fall short of what Thou really art.

It is beyond the mind of any man to translate the infinite into finite language. All the divinity of Thy majesty, and all the eternity of Thy Love and Thy wisdom are incapable of being understood by those whose senses confine them to a world of matter.

“And so we, who have had experience of other aspects of being, point to the natural law; the law which contains and regulates all; the law which is unfailing in its constancy and inflexible in its purpose; the law which makes that provision for every kind of activity in a universe filled with myriads of forms of being; the law that controls all the natural phenomena of life; the law that regulates the orbit of human activity.

“With an understanding of how the universe is ruled, and with a dismissal of the idea of a partisan God, there does come to the mind a picture of sequence, orderliness, rhythm, harmony and perfect balance. The individual realises that he is part of an infinite scheme, his own life playing its measured part in the divine plan.

“It is part of our task to reveal those qualities of the human spirit which can add their lustre to life, those gifts of the soul and the mind which are still unexplored regions, which are filled with vast potentialities and which, when exercised, can bring into human life a richness and sweetness, a grandeur and nobility, a breadth of vision and mental stature that transform the whole of human understanding,

These are the aspects of man which relate him to the eternal; these are the divine attributes which Thou hast implanted; and these are the gifts which, when developed make him god-like and help to fulfill his birthright and to claim his heritage.

“Thus it is that we labour in the fields of spiritual attainment, for it is there that so much ignorance reigns. If that could be dispelled, the light of truth would be the guide for all humanity.

“All that belongs to the darkness would no longer exist and Thy children everywhere would live as Thou dost intend, free, upright and worthy of their divine kinship.”

And here is an inspired acknowledgement of man’s divine heritage:

“Oh, Great White Spirit, we are living witnesses to Thy eternal truths, to Thy power and to Thy unchanging law. We see Thee reflected in the panorama of nature which is Thy divine handiwork.

“Thou art to be seen in the rising and the setting of the sun, in the glittering stars in

the firmament, in the lapping of the ocean's tide, in the gentle breeze, in the nodding pines, in the droning insects, in the azure skies, in all the facets of an ever-changing natural order of life.

“Thou art to be found in the spirit which is within all Thy living creatures. In man Thou art seen as individual consciousness, for Thou hast raised him up so that he can partake with Thee in the processes of shaping infinite creation.

“Thou hast bestowed on man many of Thy divine attributes, and he possesses as a consequence the gifts of the spirit, those faculties which enable him to be aware of the more subtle forces of life, the Power of the spirit.

“It is this power which has made life possible; it is this power which distinguishes him from the Whole of creation; it is this power which gives him the ability to think and judge, to reflect and decide, to behold beauty and to understand it, to receive wisdom and to appreciate it, to acquire knowledge and to value it.

“It is this power which makes him subject to the inspiration of the larger life; it is this power which makes it possible for him to come to the rescue of those who bear life's difficulties; it is this power which makes him aware of the world of spirit and all its denizens who seek to use him in the larger fields of service; it is this power which makes him aware of his own place in the vast cosmic scheme.

“We desire to spread knowledge of all that which will make man fulfill his appointed role, which will enable him to claim his larger destiny.

“Thus will he be able to drive out all the darkness which at present obscures the light; thus will he be able to live in wisdom, truth, understanding, harmony and peace; thus will he play his part in helping others to understand their relationship to Thee, the purpose of their lives and to realise the greater life which awaits them beyond the door that men call death.”

Finally, a prayer on service:

“Let us all pause to attune ourselves to the mighty of the universe, to the fountain of all wisdom, to the divine mind, that we may refresh ourselves and gain strength, that we may bather ourselves in its wisdom, that we may receive direction, purpose and understanding.

“Oh, Great Spirit, we all desire to be Thy servants to the fullest measure, to spread Thy truth, Thy wisdom, Thy love and an understanding of Thy eternal natural laws. We desire to give Thy children an understanding of their place in Thy infinite scheme that they may truly find themselves and learn to use the power that Thou hast given them in a world that is full of darkness and bitterness, anger and hatred. We desire to stress the simple truths of spirit realities, which provide always the eternal foundations for justice, for right, for goodness and for beauty. To those who have lost their way, who know not where to find Thee, our aim is to teach them that Thou art within them, that Thy infinite spirit resides within their beings, that truly

the kingdom of heaven is within, a kingdom of joy and happiness, a kingdom of wisdom and understanding, a kingdom of toleration and righteousness.

“We desire to reach all those who are sad and weary, sick and distressed, who mourn and who are not yet comforted, who are tired and weary, who know not where to turn for guidance and for understanding, so that they realise Thou has not left them alone. Our mission encompasses the whole world of matter and all people who dwell in it, making no distinction between them, realising that Thy spirit flows through every human nature, through every facet of the mighty universe, and is expressed in every atom of consciousness.

“With the recognition of that truth there will come a new peace, which will quicken the hearts and souls and minds of men and make them live for one another, serving Thee by serving Thy children everywhere.”

Service - how many of us really serve mankind in the ennobled and dedicated sense constantly urged by Silver Birch? True selflessness is attained by the few, but the following words can act as a spur to those who are willing to admit how far short we fall of the supreme religious ideal embodied in that simple, seven-letter word:

“The whole keynote of our teaching is contained in the word - service. We have declared eternal warfare on that selfishness which is one of the cancers in your world. We are intent on destroying that materialism which leads to war, to bloodshed, to chaos, to destruction.

“Ours is the gospel of mutual helpfulness, co-operation, tolerance, sympathy. We desire all to learn to serve one another, that he who has much shall give some of his abundance to him who has none or little; that he who is richly endowed with gifts of the mind shall use his inheritance to enlighten those who are still in the darkness.

“Your world needs service. It needs the spread of the idea that all people are parts of one another, that the divine spirit flows through all human beings, making them all equal in the sight of the Great Spirit - equal so far as their natures are concerned. Greatness comes when those who are more advanced in character, in growth, in evolution and in understanding try to share what they possess with those who lack these possessions.

“Those who work for the world of spirit, those who place their gifts at its disposal, will always find that they are served as they serve, because they are tapping the law which must fulfill itself. It is not part of a bribe, or a reward, it is merely the fulfillment of the law of cause and effect, that he who gives the most can receive the most.”

Here are Silver Birch's views on the important subject of children's religious education:

“Let us begin with the very obvious truism that the child of to-day is the man or woman of to-morrow. Thus we realise quite simply that all the education it receives

should be an adequate preparation for the life which lies ahead beyond schooling, so that it is equipped, ready to face the tasks that citizenship imposes upon all adult lives.

“True education should consist in the dissemination of that knowledge which will enable children to be citizens of the world in which they live. It should instruct them in all the natural laws of the universe. It should make them aware of all the faculties with which they have been endowed, so that an unfolding of them will be of the greatest service to their own lives and to the world in which they live.

“The child is malleable; its mind is as yet unformed in judgment; it has no instinctive means of reflection and judgment, of weighing up whether statements which are taught are true, are false, or contain but a portion of truth. The mind of the child is very plastic, and, being trustworthy, it accepts as truth that which is inculcated into its mind at an age when it is too early to question the instructions which are given.

“Thus you are dealing with very precious and very delicate material, for you are helping to form impressions that will become part of the warp and the woof of the child’s own being. You are reaching the subconscious mind of the child, and everything which is being taught to it will colour its thinking in later life. Those who, for whatever reason, deliberately inculcate doctrines which are false, are guilty of a very grave disservice to the future of the race and of civilisation.

“If you are ignorant of the child’s many potentialities, if you are unfamiliar with spiritual realities, and, as a consequence, are unable to teach it the truths about its own being, its own nature, its relationship to the Great Spirit, its relationship to the vast cosmic plan of life, then the child will be handicapped. It will go through life not as fully equipped and armed with knowledge as it should.

“It does not fall within my province to deal with the essential requirements for the physical life. These are well known, for it is obvious that there should be tuition in all the sciences and the natural phenomena of life, in all that would help to cultivate the mind to appreciate the riches of literature and all the arts and refinements of your World.

“And so I come to the question of religion, which, seeking to give guidance to the soul so that it can be prepared to face and to conquer all life’s battles, obviously plays a paramount part in education. Because every child is part of the Great Spirit, because it is in essence a spiritual being, it is intended to live with all the benefits that freedom brings. If you cramp, if you restrict the soul of the child at an early age, you are denying it its elementary rights of freedom; you are condemning it to serfdom; you are making it a spiritual slave.

“Freedom is the essence of all education. As I see it, the child will grow in freedom if it is taught the truths about religion. If those who are teachers give instructions based upon a desire, not to give the child freedom, but to teach it loyalty to ancient

myth and fable, then they are poisoning the springs of the child's mind. No service is rendered to religion, to education or to the child by teaching it discarded creeds which, if it is intelligent, it will reject at the earliest possible age.

“Then there will come the inevitable reaction. It will turn its back on all those whom it considers misled it at a time when it had no means of resisting them. The young sapling is intended to grow stalwart and straight as a tree, but if you give it nurture which is false, then you are helping to tamper with the very roots of its being and the growth will become stunted.

“We oppose all those whose desire is not to teach the truths about the spirit, not to teach about the relationship spiritual beings and the Great Spirit of life, but whose desire is to strengthen their tottering churches and to fill their emptying pews. The truth about religion is that no religion possesses the whole of truth. Each has seen but a glimpse and that, alas, has become distorted with the centuries or falsified by the creedalists.

“The child must be taught that true religion is to give service, to ignore all the elaborate phrase-making of priestcraft, and to live an honest, unselfish life, desiring to help the world in which it dwells and so be true to the Great Spirit of Whom it is an integral part.”

“How would you explain the Great Spirit to children?” Silver Birch was once asked. He answered:

“That is not a difficult task if the one who is to do the explaining has a clear conception of the power which is behind all life. For myself, I would point to the divine artistry of nature's handiwork. I would point to the stars, the diamonds in the sky. I would point to the glory of the sun, to the pale reflection of the moon. I would point to the whispering, murmuring breeze, to the nodding pines. I would point to the trickling stream and to the mighty ocean. I would touch every facet of nature showing how each is controlled by purpose, by law. I would add that where man has made any discovery in the field of natural life, he finds it comes within the orbit of law, that its growth is controlled and regulated, that it is part of one vast, intricate, yet harmonious pattern, that order reigns supreme throughout the vast universe, controlling planets and insects, storms and breezes, all life, no matter how variegated its expressions may be.

“And then I would say, the mind behind all that, the power that sustains it all, the force that controls the whole vast panorama of the universe and many other worlds that you have not yet seen, is what we call the Great Spirit.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ANY QUESTIONS?

What does Silver Birch think of reincarnation? What are his views on crime, vivisection, suicide? From every part of the world, the problem questions come.

To the questions: "Is vivisection right or wrong? Can humanity benefit from this practice?" he answered: "I am opposed to the whole practice of experiments on animals. I see no justification for it whatsoever. Animals are placed in your guardianship and your care, and to some extent yours is the responsibility of helping their growth and their evolution. It is a poor recompense for love, devotion and fidelity to inflict pain upon a helpless creature.

"The healing power in many forms of nature is there waiting for you to find it. The Great Spirit has provided all that is necessary without this interference with the animal creation. Those who work from my world, who are now regarded as having some skill in the alleviation of your diseases, and even curing when others have said that recovery is impossible, do not resort to vivisection. They use herbs of the fields; they use the rays of the spirit. These do not involve any cruelty to anybody. The universe is filled with a moral purpose. Immoral purpose is contrary to the law."

"Is it ever permissible for a person to pass on by his own act - such as the one who is left of devoted companionship?" To this, there came the uncompromising reply:

"No. You must live your lives according to the law, for the law is always perfect in its operation. It is controlled by perfect love and by the Great Spirit, Who is in all things and Who works through all things. You have no right to interfere with the operation of the law, and if you do you must pay the price for cutting yourself off.

"If you force the apple to drop from the tree before it is ripe, then the apple has no sweetness. If you force yourself to go into the next stage of life before your spirit is ready, then you will have to pay the price in the long adjustment that you will have to make. It will also have the effect of causing you to be separated from the ones you love, for you will have made a gulf:"

Another interesting question was, "At what time does the spirit enter the body?"

"As a spirit, you have always existed," he explained, "because spirit is part of life and life is part of spirit. You have always existed.

"Because *you* are part of the Great Spirit," he continued, "*you* have never had a beginning, but you as an individual, as a separate, conscious individuality, must begin somewhere even in the stream of life. When conception takes place, the cells of the male and female meet and provide a vehicle for a particle of the life-force to begin to express itself through a physical body. The life-force is unexpressed until there is a vehicle through which it can manifest. That is what the earth parents provide. From the time the cells have coalesced and formed their union, the tiny particle of spirit has naturally attached itself and begins its expression in your world

of matter. And hold that that is the dawn of consciousness. From that moment it begins its conscious individual life. Thereafter it will always be an individual entity of its own.”

Another tricky question began: “Through no fault of their own, innocent babies are born into the world victims of hereditary, venereal and other diseases. This does not seem quite fair, as it is not the fault of the child that it has inherited such a disease. Can you say something about that?”

The guide answered: “Those who talk of unfairness are still thinking in terms of bodies, of a world of matter, and not of an infinite life. The spirit does not suffer from venereal disease. The spirit is not crippled or misshapen or bent. The spirit is not suffering from any hereditary traits or any of the acquired characteristics of the parents. These do not change the individual, although they do affect the body through which the spirit manifests on earth.

“Whilst you can quite possibly argue that, from the earthly point of view, looking at life solely from a material standpoint, the one who is born into a diseased body has a much worse time physically than the one born into a healthy body, those opinions do not hold in regard to the spirit which is behind the body. You will not automatically be poorer in spirit because your body is diseased, and richer in spirit because your body is healthier. Indeed, it can be argued that your spirit will be richer because you will have learned the many lessons of pain and suffering which are all part of the equipment of the spirit in its essential evolution.”

Silver Birch seldom discusses astrology, but once, a member of the circle said to him: “I have noticed some Spiritualists get astrology and Spiritualism confused in their minds. They think their life on this world is somewhat determined and controlled by the stars.”

“What is true,” said the guide, “is that the whole of life is a series of vibrations, radiations and emanations, and that you are influenced by every part of the natural order or being. All these cause some influence on you, but none of them is so potent that it exercises a power which you cannot alter.

“It is not true that your life is predestined because at the moment of physical birth some star was in the ascendant. All planets, all nature, everything in the universe, all beings have some effect on you. But you are the master of your soul; you have personal responsibility, and you fix your own destiny according to your spiritual progress. That is as I see it.”

“You do not think the star under which you were born affects your personality?” he was asked. The guide answered: “I think all of these planets have radiations which affect the physical body, and things which affect the physical body have some effect on the spirit; spirit is supreme; the spirit is pre-eminent, and there is no star or planet or constellation or galaxy which can prevent you from mastering all the physical influence which affect your body.

“I mean that you are part of the Great Spirit, and because you are divine, because the power of creative life is within you, because you are a portion of that power which fashioned all life, you can rise triumphant over all that might hold your body in subjection. I am an influence on you; the people you meet are influences on you; the books you read are influences on you; but they are influences, not overwhelming and overriding. Surely that is quite clear.”

Silver Birch asserts that reincarnation is a fact. He has seen individuals who have previously incarnated into matter. “It is done,” he states, “by those who have specific missions to perform, a voluntary act in order to redeem a pledge.

What incarnates is another aspect of the same individuality, and I do not mean personality. If you visualise man as an individual, who in his earthly life is like an iceberg in which you have one small portion manifesting and the larger portion not manifesting, then that is the end of one incarnation. In a successive incarnation, a portion of the submerged self will come into the world of matter, two different personalities, but one individual. And in spirit life, as progression takes place, it is part of the submerged self that comes to the surface all the time.

“I have been thinking very much about the prevalence of the rising crime wave amongst young people and the abolition of corporal punishment. What would be the appropriate way of treating these young people who seem to have nothing to which one can appeal, who are in themselves brutes? How can one cope with a brute? What sort of punishment can one devise?”

To this perplexed sitter, the guide’s answer was: “When you have war you release the worst forces in mankind in addition to the most noble surges of the human mind. You find there are deeds of heroism which show the apex of human attainment, but at the same time there are deeds of foul brutality.”

“The two extremes get released,” said the questioner.

“Yes,” was the answer, “and violence is encouraged as a necessary part of war. When it comes to an end, you cannot quickly end all the violence and brutality that have been unleashed. You have a condition where the brutal side has become uppermost in large numbers. You ask how this is to be treated. There are two ways, and they are clearly set out in a book which is revered in your world. There is the old way, which says, ‘An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’, and there is the newer way, which was the law to supersede the old maxim, ‘Love thy neighbour as thy self.’ That is the clear choice.

“If you follow the lower road, you are not obtaining any cures. You may obtain palliatives, temporary remedies, but you have not cured the evils or the brutality, If you adopt the other standard and recognise that this viciousness is part of the maladjustment of mind, body and spirit, and treat it accordingly so that the maladjustment can be properly adjusted, then you will make better citizens. That is the way that I would advocate.

“Yes I see that, but the difficulty is getting at these young thugs, how to get on the soft side,” the questioner declared.

“It is not a question of getting on the soft side,” asserted the guide. “It is a question of giving them the kind of psychological and, if needs be, spiritual treatment that would subdue the brutality and allow what is in reality the soul to find some expression. It is just like one who is ill and there is not a true alignment of body and soul. There are various ways of curing illness. The most satisfactory method is to end the faulty alignment of body and spirit and allow a harmonious expression, and health automatically results. In the same way, if you could obtain the help of experts in psychology and allow even Spiritual healers to work their will, you would get results, but unfortunately your world is not ready.”

The discussion continued as a member of the circle said: “It is a most interesting question. When you give these young thugs a good hiding they appear to behave themselves”

“You instil fear, but you do not cure the malady:” insisted the guide.

“But you do frighten them into behaving,” said the visitor.

“Yes, but you have not solved the problem of the individual” Silver Birch declared. “You are looking at it purely from a very limited period. It is like hanging a man; you say if you hang him you have solved the problem. Yes, you have partially, but the man is still there.

“Is the welfare of one reprobate more than the welfare of society?” asked the same member of the circle.

“Society is composed of individuals,” said the guide. “All must receive attention. I am pointing to what I think is the better way - not to meet violence with violence, but with understanding and to transform what was violence into good citizenship.’

Here another member of the circle commented: “We are all responsible for the thug. It is our responsibility.”

“We are all responsible,” said the guide, “because all mankind is one and what affects my brother must affect me. We are living in a universe where the whole of life is interdependent on every aspect and not one facet can be isolated from the rest.”

“Flogging is nothing but a palliative, it merely frightens them into behaving properly,” said the original questioner.

“Your modern society has not yet attained the stage where it knows the appropriate remedies for the evils which afflict it,” added Silver Birch. “This is a matter of evolution. You used to hang people for stealing sheep. It was argued with force that unless you hang them, what would happen to all the sheep that had to be protected?”

“I suppose that in a half-evolved society it is correct to have a half-evolved treatment

and punishment,” said a member of the circle.

“It is not correct as long as one soul understands the better way,” Silver Birch insisted. “Which is the better, to fling men into horrible prisons or to work for the betterment of prison conditions, so that you transform the prisoner into a proper citizen? Better to have one success and ninety-nine failures than no attempt to raise them up at all.”

“Would you agree that capital punishment is right?” the guide was asked during the discussion. He responded: “No, I don’t agree with that because it is not the lesser of two evils. In capital punishment, you are merely condoning legal murder. You say it is wrong for the individual to murder but it is right for the state to murder. That is not logical.”

“Is your main objection because of the man shot out of life, or because it means a hangman is employed by the state to murder that man as an official act, and therefore, it is very bad indeed for the man who has to do the murder?” he was asked.

“I would emphasise both those viewpoints and the fact that if you persist in hanging it means that you are not yet an evolved society or community, because you do not realise that you have not solved the problem. All you have done is to commit one more murder, for which you are all responsible. It is not punishment. All you have done is to precipitate a soul into another world.”

CHAPTER TWELVE

WHO IS SILVER BIRCH?

We have read some of the teaching and wisdom of Silver Birch in preceding chapters. But what of Silver Birch himself? Who is he? Where does he come from? What is the purpose of his mission to earth?

Sylvia Barbanell, in her foreword to *More Wisdom of Silver Birch*, tells part of the story. “More than a score of years have passed,” she relates, “since I sat in my first circle. It was held in a very humble home in one of the poorer districts of London. One of the sitters, a young man who had just begun to inquire into Spiritualism, was astonished to find, when the second séance he attended was over, that he had been entranced. He was, and remains, Silver Birch’s medium.

“But how different were those early manifestations from those of to-day! When the guide first announced himself at that sitting he could barely string a few words of English together. Gradually, he learned to speak with increasing fluency. It has taken him a long time to attain his present, rich vocabulary.

“The young man, chosen by Silver Birch as his earthly instrument, had to be tried, tested and trained in the work he was to undertake. Over a long period of years his footsteps were guided in certain directions until the desired goal was reached - a

wider field of opportunity for the words of Silver Birch to be spread far and wide.

“Those who know this guide can call him beloved friend as well as counsellor and teacher. He never holds aloof from humanity, but radiates compassionate understanding of our earthly problems and weaknesses.

“The personality of Silver Birch has developed and deepened since first I knew him; or rather it would be more accurate to say that he presents a fuller aspect of his true, spiritual individuality. In the early days of his manifestation he was a jesting, sometimes boisterous, but always lovable spirit control. It has been a gradual ‘evolution’ to the wise, mature teacher of to-day. Even his voice has altered and now differs almost completely from that of his medium. Indeed, such another side of his individuality is now expressed that I doubt whether I would recognise him as the same spirit guide were it not for our continued association. There are, it is true, certain characteristics that have not changed. He still exhibits a keen sense of humour and maintains the gift of rapid repartee.”

“I am a voice crying out in the wilderness. I am a servant of the Great Spirit. What does it matter who I am? Judge me by what I strive to do. If my few words, my earnestness, my determination, my mission among you, bring comfort or light to one who is struggling in darkness, then I am happy.”

This was the reply of Silver Birch when one of his circle asked for a hint of his real identity. What is known is that he is an evolved messenger of an advanced group who uses the astral body of an Indian as a stepping stone between his own sphere and ours. But he regards works as of greater value than labels.

“I am but a humble servant,” he once said, “an interpreter for those who have sent me to expound forgotten laws that must be revived as part of the new world that is gradually dawning. Think of me always as a mouthpiece. I represent the voice of the spirit that seeks to make its presence felt in your world and which is succeeding in increasing measure. There is a vast concourse, all with wills perfectly attuned, with minds in harmony, with souls all at one. They use me, even as I use this instrument, to tell your world the truths that have been buried for too long but which are now being restored and given their rightful place in the lives of thousands of men and women.”

Another time he revealed: “I have come back merely to stress a few elementary spiritual truths. It seems to me - and I am quite an old man - that what your world needs is not some high-flown, theological, abstract collection of doctrines, but a few simple truths enthroned in the hearts of most religions, taught by those who were inspired by the power of the spirit in days gone by, that all mankind is part of one another, that beneath our physical differences there is a common bond of the spirit which unites us all.”

“I always see my mission as two-fold,” he told another gathering of the circle. “One is purely destructive and the other constructive. First, to destroy all those weeds

which have choked the human soul for too long; the weeds of falsity encouraged by the churches; all the nonsensical, revolting and sometimes blasphemous doctrines offered in the name of religion. All these must be extirpated, for they prevent life being lived as it should. That is the destructive part.

“The constructive part is to offer knowledge, showing how reasonable, how simple, how beautiful and how true it is to all who are ready to receive it. The two tasks go hand in hand, and I am unconcerned with those who dislike any criticism of venerable falsehood. I have seen too many of the results in your world and in mine.”

In an age of superlatives, high-pressure salesmanship, slick evangelism, and life lived at a pace so frantic that many of us dare not stop to think in case we get left behind, the reasoned, tranquil prose of Silver Birch shimmers in a quiet backwater of sanity.

Here is a splendid enlightenment, immaculate concept of spiritual thought and action, an unwavering advocacy of integrity, moral courage, ethical conduct and service to God, man, and every living thing.

There is dignity, humour, compassion, understanding and an unassailable grandeur in the teachings of this visitor from the world of spirit. Yet . . .

“The same blood flows in our veins, the same spirit is in each of our natures. The Great Spirit has made us all members of one family. The children make differences and fail to see the underlying unity, and they have to be reminded that there is no true progress until these spiritual realities take their place in all worldly systems.

“Brotherhood, co-operation, service, toleration - these are fundamentals in all life, and until man learns to build on these foundations, there can be no true peace. Serve one another, love one another, desire to help one another, that he who has much shall give some to him who has not enough - these are the simple truths which must be stressed over and over again. And I do know this: that all who apply them in their own lives and in the lives of peoples and nations, will provide the kind of existence which man was intended to have.”

Surely it is worth having a try. . . .

Many years ago I read this book, which inspired me to buy whatever I could find of the ‘Teaching of Silver Birch.’ This information became the basis of my knowledge upon which everything else is based. If this book means anything to you the books of Silver Birch’s teachings can still be acquired from bookshops. J.H.H.