

The Challenging Light

by

HELEN GREAVES

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Also by Helen Greaves:

Wheel of Eternity
Testimony of Light
Living Waters

This book is dedicated to my two Aquarian friends, M.E.P. and J.M.L., without whose help and support it would never have been completed.

The Challenging Light

*Truth is within ourselves, it takes no rise from outward things,
whate'er you may believe.*

*There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception - which is truth;
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Blinds it, and makes all error; and, 'to know'
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without.*

Robert Browning

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PROLOGUE

The Idea

Nothing can stop an Idea when its time has come,' bears the hallmark of truth. For life has a way of postponing the significance of a creative idea until the time of its fulfilment.

Thus when Frances Banks and I met and became friends, no conception that we would work together in writing books ever entered my mind; and as for the probability (even the possibility) of a partnership spanning two worlds, that was beyond imagination.

Yet it happened!

Frances Banks was a worker! She had an intellectual mind and a clever brain. For twenty-eight years she was a professed nun in an Anglican Order in South Africa. Always she was eager to learn more and more, and to impart much of what she had experienced to others. When she realised she was in line for the honourable estate of Mother Superior of the Convent she asked for release from her vows. Frances felt that she had much to learn from the way of the world, from other teachings of the meaning of Christianity; and also in mind was the strong conviction that she had much to give of her own experiences of the religious life.

Her departure from Convent life being accepted, albeit with regret by many, she came to England.

By this time she had become interested in the possibility of communication with souls released by death of the body into a greater world. She joined the newly-formed Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies, and soon was elected to its Council.

It was at this period in her life that we met at a religious Conference.

I was immediately impressed, as most people were, by her tall straight figure, her strong spiritual face, and the large lustrous grey eyes that seemed to look into your very soul.

She began to come and visit me; and later came to live in the flat above me at Addington Park.

Looking back now to my early days with Frances at Addington, I can trace the very moment when 'the idea' first took root in my friend's mind. We had started a Group of seven friends for meditation, discussion and teaching. There were two men and five women including myself. The Group met in my sitting-room, the others driving down from their homes in London.

I give thanks for the help, the happiness, and the teaching of that Group. It went on from strength to strength for eighteen years, never missing a meeting, and growing into a much larger number of members.

Frances and I were the leaders, and she was thrilled and excited as it progressed.

One day, after we had been meeting for some months, she came down to my flat with a sheaf of typed papers.

'We should write about this Group,' she explained. 'It is so interesting, I've written the first three chapters. You could do the next three!'

I gazed at her in sudden alarm. 'Share the writing of a book?' I burst out. 'With you?'

'And why not,' she retorted.

Because you are an intellectual, Frances! And I am not!' But you have the gift,' she explained, 'the gift of intuition, of being aware, of knowing!'

I hesitated.

'You're the sensitive, the seer, Helen. I'm the intellectual - all right. Doesn't that make the perfect partnership?'

I shook my head. 'I still don't think I can work with you, Frances. We're such different people -'

She smiled 'Are we?' Then she turned to go. 'Well, I'll leave the chapters with you.'

Suffice it to say the typing was locked away in my desk, and I never added a word to it. Neither did she ever broach the subject again, and I still have those early attempts of hers to fulfil what has become our destiny.

Three years later, Frances had passed from this world, and was already 'aware' of the part she was to play in my life, although I certainly was not.

Was the Idea conceived by her Higher Mind from that very moment of time when I rejected the chapters? And did it have to wait its time, its growth, into a purpose that conceived and inspired the book *Testimony of Light* which has had such wide approbation from thousands of readers?

And has the 'Idea' now reached its time? I believe quite firmly and sincerely that such is the truth.

Hence this book, inspired and written by the two of us, one in this world of dull matter, and one in the glorious freedom for the expanse of the beauty of the soul in a further Life.

The idea has moved another step forward towards fulfilment.

As I now see it, this Idea of the Challenging Light in our lives here on earth, and the reality of a life in the Spirit after the death of the body, will bring a revolution in the total ethics of the Christian religion. The fear of death, inherent in so many lives, will then no longer magnify the power and threat of the gun, the sword, the knife or the finality of nuclear weapons of destruction.

My friend Frances being unable to finish her work owing to an early death from cancer and, in the next world being in a position to view with horror the warring unhappiness of our world, has returned to inspire me even in my retirement, to write this book with her.

May our efforts touch the hearts of all people in the world, of whatever beliefs or faiths, and lead us without war safely into the next century.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

When I met Frances Banks for the first time, we were introduced and we shook hands. 'Oh, I know you,' Frances remarked!

I shook my head. 'I don't think you do!' I said.

'Oh, yes. I would always recognise your eyes.' Then she smiled, 'We have worked together before - and we will again!' I said nothing, for I had heard that statement before from others.

However, it was to be so, for we became good friends. Later, after her beloved Mother Florence spoke convincingly to her through me, Frances never let go of me. She called me the Celestial Telephone.

Later, after the furnished flat which she shared with her sister just outside London was sold, she came to Addington Park to live.

It was interesting to see how much she was loved and admired by all and sundry, for she had very little money and no furniture to set up a home. But a bed, mattress, blankets, sheets were soon donated, furniture arrived from friends, and sufficient money collected to add an armchair, a table, and other necessities.

Frances never had much money until about three years later when her brother died and left her a small legacy, yet she always seemed to be helped and to have enough to live very simply.

She gave talks to the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies, but when I asked what was her fee, she smiled, 'Oh, I never take a fee - it's part of my earthly service,' she retorted. 'I only ask for my fare.' It was something I learned and never forgot, for later when I too stood on platforms and talked about my work and books, I felt bound to follow Frances' code of conduct.

She was a woman, I feel that I can now say, who went straight for any ploy, any work that she felt was in her power to do. She never hesitated. She made opportunities, and fulfilled them. She was a leader and a woman whose whole life had been dedicated to work and service.

This is emphasized by her twenty-eight years of obedience to the vows she took and by the extraordinary work that she did in South Africa. She wrote spiritual books for children, curriculums taught at the College for Teachers next door to the Convent, at the same time studied for an M.A. degree which she won, and even went out on missions to the native races in the wilder regions of that country. All this and strict community exercises and prayers too! Later she became Head of the College for Teachers, and arranged the students' concerts, and even dress parades.

When Frances saw some service that could be performed, she did it. Thus I was not surprised at her 'return' from the next world, and her emphasis that I write with her

help, *Testimony of Light*, which has gone all over the world, and is still a best-seller in its field seventeen years after publication. Should I have any doubts that now in her greater knowledge she would wish to collaborate in a sequel to that book?

From her initial words to me, spoken on our first meeting, I can now look back and see her dedication and desire to enlighten others with her own knowledge, and I can verify the inherent understanding of the spiritual needs within mankind. I have received hundreds of letters from many countries, from readers thanking me for the help received from *Testimony of Light* when they were in trouble, in stress, or experiencing great sadness at the loss of dear ones.

Is it any surprise that I now understand and accept her first words to me? 'We have worked together before. We will work together again.'

Frances' story reminds me of an incident which happened soon after I met her in 1955. As shown in her book *Teach them to Live*, she had spent some years as Tutor Organiser in Maidstone Prison where she was successful with even the most difficult prisoners, helping them to discover latent talents in themselves. She showed me remarkably good sketches and watercolours painted by the prisoners, and many articles designed and made by them.

But there was one prisoner, an unfrocked priest, who was entirely intransigent and refused to listen. One day he argued with her - against all that could be called good and fine or progressive and spiritual. It was the last time she ever saw the man. He disappeared from her classes; later she learned that he had committed suicide.

Some two years later when she had resigned from the prison service, she and I were having tea together in my flat. Slowly as we talked I became aware of the presence of a man from the next plane of existence. He gave his name, and then into my mind came the words, 'Tell her that what she said to me at our very last meeting is absolutely true!'

I told this to Frances, and she knew at once who it was, recalling what she had said to him, and the words that he used.

'During our last conversation,' she said, 'this prisoner had taunted me, insisting there was nothing beyond the grave but dead matter. I had replied that five minutes after death he would be exactly the same.'

As she spoke I could still hear the voice in my mind, saying: 'And that was absolutely true. I had not changed.'

Frances smiled, and said: 'They were the last remarks that we had together. Evidently he has progressed in the next world, and understands. Bless him!'

How rare it must be to have some profound experience repeated in exact facsimile many years later! Yet this happened to me with startling wonder in the second return of my friend Frances Banks.

After *Testimony of Light* was published, communication with Frances ceased

altogether until nearly fifteen years later. Then, with the suddenness of immediacy she was beside me again, and I knew it!

At this time, 1981, I had retired, owing to threatening blindness, from my cottage, to a small quiet home for the elderly, run by two dedicated ladies. The thought of doing nothing was anathema to me and I had started in a desultory way to write the story of my changing life style.

One morning, as I sat at my desk in the window of my room, my thoughts would not be disciplined and I stared laconically at the passing cars along the road. Suddenly, unexpectedly, and inexplicably I was alive, physically trembling with an inner spiritual energy.

For a moment I was still. Then I shouted aloud. 'Frances! You've come back!' And I stood up.

Frances was beside me. I knew! She was there beside me as real as though she still existed in the body, 'Oh, Frances!' I was almost crying with excitement. Then there was a tap on my door and a friend of mine who lives in the Home entered. 'Frances has come back!' I was shouting, yet unaware of it. 'Frances has returned!'

Her pleasure was immediate, for she too had known her. We talked for a moment. Then I picked up my pen. 'I must write it down,' I said. 'Write what?' I asked myself a minute later. Suddenly with perfect clarity I knew. Frances never wasted her time or effort in dilatory converse. Indeed she made her reason for communicating with me entirely plain.

She had come back for a purpose. There was work to be done. She needed me, as I needed her! There was a book to be written. I was to write it! She, and the companions in her Group, would inspire it. I sat, electrified. So, she had not changed! Her spirit was stronger than ever.

Dismay, excitement, joy and doubt all seemed to take possession of my mind. How could I write a book? I could now scarcely read one. But when I was calm enough to reason with her, she had gone; and I was aware that such a book would be written, as she had told me.

And so it was. For she would start a chapter in my head, almost before I had awakened in the morning.

At first I jotted down the ideas and pieces. They sounded fascinating. I was intrigued. Some few weeks later after I had been registered blind by the eye specialist, I began to write the various chapters of the book. By now I could not read at all, and my writing was almost indecipherable. A friend lent me a recorder. I tried to speak into it, but when I played back the words they were flat and uninteresting. It was useless.

One morning I sat down to try to put on paper the words that had been running through my brain from the moment I had awakened. Imagine my surprise and joy

when I found I could scrawl the words across the foolscap paper. I began to write. I became immersed. It was two hours later when I put down my pen. I had filled four foolscap pages with the untidy but inspired scrawl across the ruled lines, yet I could not read a word of it!

The book is now finished. And I have never read a word of it! Miracles do happen when the Spirit of the Creator is involved.

CHAPTER II

The Message of Frances Banks

My life on the earth plane being finished by an untimely illness and death, I sought and found others of higher progress and greater experience to help me. Their advice was so realistic and sophisticated that I followed it.

'Work through the higher mind of your friend, Helen Greaves,' they insisted. 'It can be done!' The result was the book, *Testimony of Light*, whose words awakened the sleeping Spirit in thousands of lives.

Then, after I had rejoined my own Group, and learned more of the working of the Great Spirit of Light, the suggestion was raised that a second volume might be attempted. The Great Ones here knew of the parlous state into which humanity had drifted, owing to the evil engendered by ignorance, fear, envy and distrust.

My co-writer had by this time retired from an active literary life. I was assured that such was her belief and trust in the Spirit of the Christ in man, and her recognition of the ease with which we had communicated, that she would respond wholeheartedly to our call, even though we would face many, difficulties.

And so it was! And so it is!

Humbly, I offer this treatise on the Spirit of Light, both in man incarnate in the world of matter, and awake in the soul in the land beyond physical experience.

My message is in two parts, simple and straightforward. First, to illustrate the work of the Spirit of God the Creator in His creation, and their evolution, and second, the souls of earth-born men and the souls of those who have passed from the earth are one in the Spirit of God.

Communication in the right way and for helpful and uplifting purposes is possible in the true understanding of the life of the Spirit. All men have souls. The development of such souls being unequal it behoves those in this consciousness to aid and guide their brethren in the complex plane of human existence.

People living on the earth-plane have ever formulated varying ideas about the possibility of life after the death of the body. These beliefs and hopes have extended from the old conviction of heaven and hell through all grades of existence, even to the atheistic decree of the complete and utter darkness of the grave. This last

speculation could, of course, be a fudging of the issue, because of inner fear within the minds of such believers. But it is also a statement that makes nonsense of all creativity, all law and order of life and of evolution of the species, as we have seen and known it throughout the ages. Further it denies a Creator or a creative Plan. The very seasons deny it. Can the disbeliever ignore the miracle of Spring, when life returns to the seemingly dead herbage of the earth?

A further world after the finish of a span of material existence is accepted by most practising Christians as a kind of paradise where everything is perfect, where Jesus meets every arriving soul for the Christians, and, of course, different world Saviours for other religions, after which they settle down to perfect, uneventful, never-ending happiness.

Is this Paradise? It certainly does not agree with the reports of the few enterprising souls who endeavour to break through the silence of fear or their childhood beliefs.

This is *Life*, not the pale web of intrigue, self-seeking domination and fear of the world of humanity. There are no police services as such, no guarding against other powers, no money which wields the main influence upon earthly souls. This is a new consciousness, a changed understanding and realisation of values. It is a land where peace and joy are the normal, not war and sacrifice.

We are souls; we think and act according to a different level of understanding. As we grow and develop here we are able to judge the life we lived, and the progress we did or did not make on the earth plane. As we evolve we find more understanding, and a change takes place in our thinking.

There are, of course, those timid souls who lived uninspired lives, who shrank from new ideas, and plodded dimly through their earth experiences without understanding or any vestige of illumination. These souls may prefer to live here, reunited with their loved ones and friends who seek no more than to be at peace and to rest in the beauty of this world.

There are no laws to change them, or interfere with their static enjoyment. It continues until the Spirit grows within them and the souls awake to a new beginning. And this happens always - even perhaps after what you would term hundreds of your earth years. Progress can be slow and steady, or immediate and compelling. All shades of evolvment are met in this world of the Spirit.

But there is one important development which I must emphasise here. Does the desire manifest itself to help friends and dear ones left behind on earth?

This is a difficult problem, for the earth people do not understand the one-ness of the teaching of Jesus who brought the Light of the Spirit to the earth.

His words: 'This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise,' and 'I am with you always, even to the end of the world,' and 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you,' have far deeper connotation than mankind has given them.

The Light is here in this world of finer consciousness, yet the Light is present in the soul of every man, woman and child on the planet of earth.

The Spirit is the Light and Light is a challenge, relied upon, believed in, trusted, revered, becomes life itself, and guides, comforts, heals and spiritualises all things.

This great precept of a Creative Spirit, the God of life in an evolving world could change fear into peace and speed up the evolution of animal and human to spirit.

This principle becoming real and alive to the souls here ensures a greater understanding and pity not only for the half-lives of earthly experience, but ensures the Christian desire to help.

We are all spirits in essence, and surely it is natural that we should be.

CHAPTER III

Crossing the Bar

*Sunset and evening star
And one clear call for me.
And may there be no moaning at the bar,
When I put out to sea.*

*But such a tide as moving, seems asleep
Too full for sound or foam,
When that which came from out the boundless deep,
Turns again home.*

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Frances seemed to be smiling at me! ‘So many people,’ she said, ‘seem to be most frightened of this state which they call death. They torture themselves with presentiments of long, dark tunnels, of a bridge to cross, of a frightening last journey, alone and terrified.

‘Some, slightly sceptical, raise their eyebrows, and look aloof and very wise. “There’s nothing to it, you just go into another room.”

‘Then the atheist, the doom-or-die man. “Oh, you won’t know anything about it. You just go into a hole in the ground and that’s the end of you. Resurrection? An old wives’ tale!”

‘These are indeed samples of the ignorance that register with the newcomers - or perhaps with the return of travellers to this popularly-termed Life after death.

‘This, for a start, is a misnomer. To our way of thinking the word “death” has the

wrong connotation. Death implies lifeless-ness, which is incorrect, for there is no moment when “life itself”, as it truly is, has not begun.

‘For Life itself, at that moment of departure, merely sheds a useless skin. Life is still present in the mind, the soul, and generally in the understanding. The human body, which is fashioned from refined particles of earth substance, simply returns to its original state.

‘In many cases of the experience which humanity terms death, the mind, even apart from the discarded physical brain, can be active. For instance, travellers in this change of consciousness from material to ethereal, rather than spiritual, have knowledge even though blurred or vague, of the change, and do not recall remembrance of any pain. If they experience terror, it is because they *expected* it. The lurid pictures impressed upon the soul-mind by mistaken teachings of hells and torturing agonies become real. This must be so because the soul- mind, by the loss of brain and nerve centres, still retains deeply-held pictures. The new aspect of the soul, and its power to think, has not yet developed. As soon as the soul “awakes”, as you term it, or becomes “soul-conscious”, as we feel is more appropriate, all fear subsides.

‘The soul has come Home. It is welcomed in many different ways. There may be a deep sleep, which is really the gentle relapse of the soul into itself to engender its coming new activity in the peace of the spirit. When it awakes it has become a *conscious* soul.

‘Is that too difficult?

‘I trust the reader may not find it so. We know that the body of a new-born infant on the earth plane must have a period of development and growth before it can exist in the material world. Meanwhile the soul hovers about it awaiting the moment of its union.

‘Birth and death both into and from the material plane in actuality consist of the adjusting of the soul’s consciousness from its true level to its different less active role.

‘The death of the human body should hold no terrors and when this thought is allowed to be taught and understood by the various practising religions of the world, a big bogey will have been removed in the onward thinking of the races.

‘My own experience of passing into this life seemed to have been made simple for me. As I related in *Testimony of Light*, I felt nothing until I “awoke” and saw my dear mother Florence, even as I had seen her on earth, sitting beside my bed. That first recognition has changed, of course, for she had already changed into becoming the high soul she is, while my own understanding and appreciation have, I trust, deepened with my various experiences.

‘But this chapter is about the transition, as we term it, and so I continue.

'As I have mentioned, my own transition was mercifully helped, perhaps because of the serious and very painful illness that tortured my earthly body, so that I welcomed the prospect ahead with relief and true hope. Perhaps also because my soul and body were utterly exhausted, so that I seemed to relapse into *nothingness* until I awoke refreshed. I cannot recall any "bridge" or "tunnel" or "hill" at all. I was as nothing, and the relief after the agonies must have seemed like heaven to my transmitting soul.

'But others here have related experiences, and I must agree that a great proportion of them seem to carry out the tunnel syndrome. Yet most approaching souls had experienced the relief of "somebody" beside them, or from a Light ahead of them. Other souls, perhaps more adventurous, recall the bridge. To many it seemed that the initial stepping on to its plank formation had to be an effort of will, then all was well - and the soul was on its way.

'A different type of returning soul chose the experience, and I say chose intentionally, across a wide sea. Our poet in the lines above had that picture in his soul - and so it would probably eventually be realised. This from a great poet, a master of his art and a great soul who knew the Spirit brings my thought to such probability that advanced souls without fear or ignorance might often choose this conscious departure of their souls to a higher consciousness. I do not know, I merely surmise such thought of a high soul's passing.

'We must come now to those who foolishly contrive their own time and method of leaving the material life. They do not realise that there is no escape from their own souls - even if they cast off the body by suicide they are, so to say, playing God and usurping the Creator's right over His Creation. For there is a time for everything - a right time. And this will arrive at the right time for the potential suicide, and not when his earthly mind thinks he wants it. There are difficulties when such souls arrive unready for this transition. My experience with some of them emphasises the dangers of such rash transits. For all is order here and such an arriving soul is obviously in dis-order.

'Death of the material body can be, and should be, a beautiful experience of the soul returning Home.'

Helen Greaves

An interesting and revealing story may be related as a commendation of Frances Banks' final words in this chapter.

A friend of mine who was over ninety became very tired of her long life. One evening she telephoned me to ask if I would pray for her to die. I could not agree to do so and said that the time would come when her life was to be finished.

My friend had been a lively, amusing woman, but of a difficult disposition. Latterly,

the nursing homes which had accepted her as a patient complained of her demands on the nurses. The poor old lady, who certainly suffered much, was always full of complaints. She never seemed to accept any service or change made.

At length, in her ninety-second year, she had the usual fall which is so often the prelude to the end. She broke some bones and was unconscious. She never recovered consciousness and died about a week after the fall. Her funeral was attended by many who had enjoyed her younger years, and the flowers were beautiful. I felt my friend would be pleased. She was not!

About a week later, I was sitting in my cottage window working out the Daily Telegraph crossword puzzle. Suddenly I felt almost a shout in my brain, and heard a name repeated twice. It was my late friend. Her conversation began swiftly, and was exactly as she had used to speak, sharp and to the point. 'Didn't know I was dead, Helen.' She never gave me time to think, and rushed on. 'I woke up in a strange bed. I asked the nurse why I had been moved! She said, "You've come over here."

' "Why?" I demanded.

'She answered that I had died.

'I was sure I had done no such thing, and I told her so! 'She then brought another nurse and they both insisted that I was dead.

'I actually quarrelled with them, Helen. Believe that.' Her words came so quickly that I could make no comment. I waited.

'I was quite angry,' she continued, 'I didn't believe I had died!' Suddenly she was silent. 'Not until I saw Frances Banks sitting quietly at the foot of my bed!'

Surely this was the case of an unrealised death journey. After a minute came the request. 'Write and tell Miss X I have gone and that I have come back to talk to you. I always promised her I would let her know.' How like my old friend!

I rose, wrote the letter, described the interview and posted it. The answer was immediate and full of gratitude. 'She always promised,' she wrote. 'Dear old friend — but how like her to grumble and complain about that which she had longed to happen! Bless her!'

As Frances has written, the old lady had never realised her 'journey over'; and was she not exactly the same five minutes after death as five minutes before? She was, indeed!

Chapter IV

The Thought World

Life *does* make sense, Frances insists. It is an outstanding example of logic, a pattern of trial and error, mistakes, failures and successes: Life is eternal, and its Plan is perfect.

This is one of the deep experiences which advent into this spiritual dimension teaches during the first stages of their new life after the soul has finally parted with the material body.

For those souls who arrive here with some idea of this Law of Life it is a great and glorious revelation.

For the simple minded, the non-thinkers, the disbelievers in any scheme of Evolution the awakening in this World of the Spirit can be beyond any preconceptions; the immediate experience can be overwhelming, creating a need for special treatment.

This I tried to explain to a business man who had never thought of having a soul, or even of bearing responsibility for the material actions of his life among men. He was met by the man he had ruined so utterly that he had taken his own life - Charlie Brookes. This was a necessary shock to introduce the first lesson he had to learn, the reality of life itself and the reality that death of the physical body only emphasised the reality of life.

As the human race progresses, the evolving soul will retain some of its knowledge, and the effect on the mind will transform ignorance and disbelief into some degree of revelation and understanding.

For those who had listened to the Inner Self, trying to live accordingly, or who had taken heed of the teachings - often inadequate yet clumsily helpful - of their Spiritual leaders, the realisation of the next Life was a wonderful awakening. To them death was but the process of stepping from one room to another, one life to a greater experience.

Life does make sense, their awakening and realisation; as it was indeed mine when I beheld my dear Mother Florence.

As this was the awakening of my friend Frances, and has been recorded in *Testimony of Light* I will not dwell on it again. Suffice to say that it convinced me of the reality of the After Life.

Francis woke me this morning to continue her talk.

'You have been wondering about the ordinary conventional man or woman who arrives here,' she went on. 'The majority of mankind do not think. They do not ask themselves any questions, such as, who am I? What am I? Why am I here? What have I come to do? They drift on from day to day, dully accepting their lot, and believing the various doctrines they were taught as children.

'The mass of humanity never question. They dull their intellects with flimsy love stories, or other folk's adventures on the high seas, or on the mountains, or they thrill and terrify their minds with ghost stories or magical occurrences or become addicts of murder mysteries.

‘You are wondering what happens to them here. Well, many of them do not change. After the first shock of awakening they greet their families and loved ones, and settle happily into their new life, without any more questioning, and often without the desire to progress. Many decide they are dreaming, until some incident, some conversation with a great soul arouses understanding and they become eager to learn more.

‘Do not condemn or pity them. We are not changed in the twinkling of an eye. We earn every step of progress that we make and there is no convention, persuasive or threatening, used to force our progress.

‘Here, as Jesus said, we go to the place prepared for us; and such a place must have been earned by our actions in our earthly life. Many souls are not even ready to review their past experiences in the body, and no other soul presses them to do so.

‘All is Spirit, and the Spirit works perfectly. It does not need time which is an earthly convenience, and simple souls learn to adjust and find peace and often a happiness they have never before experienced.

‘It is, then, perhaps many earth years after their demise that the surviving soul begins to awaken, and searches for progress. There are plenty of helpers to aid them.

‘The World of Thought is so entirely different from the material plane from which the new arrivals here come that true significance and understanding is often prolonged for them. There is no talking aloud, as on earth, for such organs of speech are no longer a part of us. Yet still we can communicate freely one with another.

‘For in this world, as in yours, the newcomer has to learn new ways. The material body, the limited human mind, the temporary personality are passing away. The dweller in this state of consciousness has no further need of them.

‘In the Thought World, Mind is the communicating link. Mind is also the energy and the purpose of the continued life of the Spirit. For the Great Divine Creative Spirit which we call God is the motivating, creating, living Power here, as it was on the earth plane. Only on earth souls found that such Power could be used for good or for evil. Here, such departures from the true and the good can be observed readily, whilst in the world of matter they could be hidden and thus increase.

‘I have come to the conclusion since being in this Plane of living that *there* one covered one’s real thoughts with the *spoken word*.

‘Here, thought speaks to thought. In other words, it is impossible to hide anything. Meaning is communicated directly between souls.

‘This is a very difficult premise. May I try to explain it this way. Mind is the person. Thought forms the pattern of the soul, even as it does in the world of matter. Only here are they recognisable by these patterns of thought, and not by the spoken words, or transforming actions of the person. That is the difference. One does not

need to wait for the action or even the word to dispute or verify the truth or otherwise of the thought. One is revealed as one is, even by one's very surroundings.

'There is an aura around the people in the earth world and this, because it cannot often be seen by the human sight, is rejected by most people. It can be shown clearly to those who have the inner sight, but here in our Thought World, such Colour and Light become a definite form.

Believe me, such garments of Light and Colour, which I have been permitted occasionally to see are beyond words to describe their beauty and the magnificence of their Light, such "garments" appear with the Great Ones, the advanced souls, the Angelic Beings.

'Such beauty I think must indeed envelop the very heart of the Creative Force of the Divine Spirit, and the Christ Power within it.

'The Spirit is Creative, and man formed from the Spirit of the Creator is evolving and growing into that Light both here and in your earth plane. Only here the evolution is clearer and more definite, for one cannot hide behind an earth form and a divided personality. As the human race learns to live more in its Higher Mind, and less in the appetites and desires of its lower self, so will the world of matter change, and man's conduct towards his brother will progress towards harmony. The destruction brought upon the earth and its inhabitants is caused by the conscious thinking of the people.

'Famines are caused by the greed of man in felling the rainmaking forests for the price of timber. A short-sighted policy for the droughts bring desecration and desert wastes. Overproduction of fertile land, taking out from the soil the chemicals, the phosphates, and the minerals, leaves the crops devoid of essential nourishment and the land becomes useless. Over-fishing the seas and the rivers lessens the shoals.

'Nature is a hard mistress. Work against her and the Spirit of Nature will reciprocate in kind. Can we not realise then, that recessions, famines and floods are man's responsibility and demonstrate his lack of true consciousness. In the world of matter man creates and man destroys. Only the true Spirit creates here in the World of Thought. Thus our environment is beautiful beyond description and nature blesses all with splendour. Thought is the seed-germ and the fertile soil.

'Yet this World is but one of the mansions in God's house. There is evolution into higher evolution, into higher wonder. For the Spirit of the Creator is ever creating and evolving, and Life itself is eternal in its mystery and wonder.

'The prospect of men and women becoming Angels after leaving the earth world, a doctrine that was agreed upon in the medieval world, does not appear to hold any true basis of fact. But that there are Beings of such evolved Spiritual glory I have no doubt. There are Spiritual Worlds beyond our narrow conception.

'In the Bible we learn that Lazarus realised that a great gulf was fixed between "your

world and mine". Equally there must be great gulfs fixed between Thought Worlds, and Spiritual Realms.

'Yet we know as we proceed onwards that all is possible to the soul returning to its Source. This is the conviction that grows more compelling and possible as we advance through the Thought World or return to the World of Matter for another grade of experience.

'Here, in the World of Thought, the soul when it has rested and received refreshment from its earthly fears, worries and pains, learns to adjust itself to its new conditions. This can often be a long and slow process, depending upon the soul's experiences, and here, as in the World of Matter, there are degrees of advancement. The thinker, the artist, the poet, the writer, the server of mankind, the person dedicated to service to his fellows, all these will graduate towards their rightful place.

'Those whose lives were selfish and arrogant, tuned to the attainment of their own desires, will gravitate to another pleasant but possibly less constructive society.

' "In my Father's House are many mansions" - houses, dwellings, and as on earth, these can vary considerably. Yet the term mansions seems to impart a surety that beauty, harmony and peace also dwell therein.

'In my short experience here, I have found that this is so. Souls adjust to their new lives. They learn to control thought forms on which they build. They recognise the mistakes that on earth caused so much misery. They learn to forgive and to forget quarrels, feuds, jealousies, failures from their earth life; they relax and grow into the new understanding of the oneness amongst the splendour and wonder of this new life. Slowly they work towards comprehension, even though of an immature nature of humanity's role in the divine scheme of Life.

'From these varying levels of the approach to thinking some will find peace, others a desire for service, some a yearning for the greater Wisdom of the Spheres, while others will form interests and develop new techniques which they will wish to take back to earth to promote a better understanding for human living.

'We are still "us" here, with the Self revealing itself more easily as the old inhibitions are shed.

'This is the gentle Life of the Spirit in which the progressing soul moves and thinks and has its being.

'But there are other abodes where the small self still persists with all its irregularities and where the desires of the material world still hold sway. I have called these the Lower Regions, and this is not an enviable world. Here are the misfits. Poor, starved souls unable to prise themselves away from the physical life. The inhabitants are more sad than wicked and become lost in their continuing appetites for the past - the misers, the mean, the weak and pathetic cravers for drink and drugs; poor lost souls who cannot or will not re-orientate their lives and their thinking.

'I will talk about these places in another chapter. Suffice it to say that there are many helpers from Higher Spheres who work unceasingly to lift the stagnation of earthly desires. Slowly, souls are released from their own captivities and aided by the Brothers of Light, climb upwards to the true Thought World, where eventually they will find peace.

'To say that there is "joy in heaven" at such returns to the Spirit of these prodigal sons and daughters is indeed a very real statement.'

CHAPTER V

Listen and Learn

'The writing of this book had come to a sudden stop. I had no ideas for the next chapter. Indeed, there was no plan for future writing. Inspiration had dried up. This is the epithet given by writers, composers, poets and artists and without it they know that their work would be lifeless and dull. But I prefer to call these moments of inner 'recognition' as my Inner Voice.

It was a long while ago, when I was about forty, and living in Western Canada that I first became 'aware' of the Inner Voice. It started to relate short stories as I walked beneath the glorious red-gold leaves of the autumn maples. I thought it was fun at first, but gradually, after personal trouble and a period of work in Britain during the last war I realised, at last, that this was the Voice of the Spirit - the Mind within which is the Mind of the inner eternal Spirit. More and more as I tried to listen and learn, truth came through that Voice.

Then I met Frances Banks. A new era dawned for me.

Frances had lived in the Spirit and she knew. I began to understand! I read the Bible with deeper understanding:

Ask and ye shall receive.

Knock and it shall be opened to you.

had a different meaning. The words are indeed truth. I learned to ask for help for the right way to live, for knowledge with which to write, for guidance when earthly conditions became difficult. And I learned, as Frances had learned, to listen.

'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you,' Jesus told his disciples. The realisation of this when it came to me was the most wonderful breaking of Light into my consciousness. I began to write on a new level.

After the blankness that followed the early death of Frances, I became aware that her mind was communicating with mine. This was a terrific impact. I began to write *Testimony of Light*.

Yet although I knew this book was of the Spirit, I was touched and astonished at readers' reactions.

I shall never forget the effect of the writing of *Testimony*. I was 'alive' as never before. I often sat with poised pen, not knowing what was to be written - and the words came. There was power in that book, the power and reality of that book, and there still is for its thousands of readers.

I recollect also how the friend who typed the manuscript told me that she lived in a world of glory and light for that entire week. It was the work of the Spirit.

Life went on for me. I wrote other books but that close contact did not live in me to the same extent, and I felt that *Testimony* would always be my best book.

Later, as I grew older, and my eyesight began to fail, I tried to write a novel involving the much disputed idea of man returning to earth in the doctrine of re-incarnation and rebirth. Hours were spent in planning and imagining incidents to work out a plot. It was far too long, it was dull and dead, and artery trouble and a slight stroke in one eye had taken my eyesight.

I had learned, I had applied, I had succeeded. And I had lost! It took the trauma of approaching blindness to bring the prodigal back.

Then, one day, after nearly fifteen years of silence Frances came back. But only after I had accepted and had returned to the Inner Spirit - the Christ within - and had found peace.

At that moment of reunion with the spirit of Frances, I knew that there was a reason. Frances never wasted moments! I had a new book to write! The future was already here. I was eighty-four years old, I could not see to read, yet here was the challenge of Light - and I could but obey it.

The Spirit spoke through the Mind and Spirit of my old friend. The book had to be written, indeed was already written in Cosmic Consciousness - or true consciousness - and no earthly weakness or stricture would be allowed to affect it.

The Spirit knew, Frances' mind knew, and now I knew! Nothing can stop an idea, when its time has come!

I took my pen, and wrote. The writing was a scrawl but readable to others. Later I would find a helper to sort out the chapters and to type it.

This is a Challenge of Light I told myself. Later the good friend who had dedicated her life to looking after the elderly and who was interested in my work suggested that *The Challenging Light* had a better ring as a title and I agreed. Mind communes with mind on this level of living.

Then, after the first burst of enthusiasm, and with about twelve thousand words on paper, there came a lull.

There had been the excitements of meeting new friends, and outings with old friends, then a morning of shopping in the nearby town, and suddenly I felt that I had come back to earth.

There was no 'inspiration' for future chapters; I felt heavily weighed down with material matters.

'The world is too much with us' wrote Wordsworth and he knew. It had been with me!

It was after the first excitement of Frances' return, and the consequent, almost feverish, writing that ensued, when there came the lull. As I should have expected!

The writing had been fairly easy, although it was but a scrawl across the paper. But I could not read it! With a strong magnifying glass I tried desperately to decipher the words, and extract the meaning from the chapters. I could not!

How then, if I ever finished the book, would I read or correct it? I began to worry.

The presence of Frances seemed to have left me. The exciting early morning moments of inspiration were lacking. I then decided to give up writing. Indeed, I felt I had nothing to write about. It was a difficult period.

The Spirit seemed to have gone out of my life - at least, that is what I told myself. Until I realised that I had sunk into a bog of depression, and was allowing it to overwhelm me.

So I started fighting my way out in the only way in which I believed. I started taking long morning walks, and, as I have heard such praying called, 'talking to God'.

Day after day, I asked for help. I followed all my own formulas, the practices which had brought me through difficult periods in the past. Slowly, I found peace returning to my mind.

One morning, as I sat on a bench beside the river, I watched a tangled mass of weeds and fallen branches being carried past me on the stream. On it were seated three small ducks. Perched comfortably on the weedy nest, they were letting the current carry them along.

'Riding the ferry,' I thought. 'They are having a day out, letting the rushing water do the work!' I found myself laughing as they swept on past me.

'Letting the stream carry them!' I repeated to myself. Suddenly I knew. 'That's what I should be doing!' I rebuked myself. 'Yet here am I, fighting the stream - and losing!'

It was the moment of Truth. I was praying to be allowed to go on writing, and I had already given up. I was saying I was too old - and Frances had gone. Was that the way she would have acted? I stirred myself, and stood up. No, she would have gone on, making herself write. I turned my steps homeward. I went straight to my desk, unscrewed my pen and laid out foolscap and began to write.

'There are four stories I would like to tell you,' I found the words flowing from my pen. 'They are short accounts of four different arrivals in my world, and what happened to them.'

I stopped writing: so Frances was there again. Perhaps she had indeed been beside

me all the time - and I had not stopped long enough to hear her!

Inspiration came like a burst of brilliant sunshine after a stormy morning. I wrote fast.

'Four stories.' The words ran through my brain. They are:

The Business Man's Story.

Mary Ellen's Story.

The Man who Loved Money.

The Policeman's Dilemma.

I wrote the titles. Later, I wrote the stories. I reproduce them here, exactly as I 'heard' them. They speak for themselves.

CHAPTER VI

Four Stories

The Business Man's Story

My first impression on recovering from what seemed to be a deep sleep or a period of unconsciousness, was a desire for a cigarette. I fumbled in my pocket and my fingers seemed to touch my cigarette case. Somehow matches were in my hand. That was good. I tried to strike a light. It seemed to me that there was a flare, and then the flame died. This was odd! But then so many happenings were odd!

After several unsuccessful attempts at igniting a match and lighting my cigarette I gave up, and began to look about me. I appeared to be at the end of a tunnel. Funny, I thought. I don't recall going down to the Underground and losing my way. I stood for a long time staring ahead at a lighted way. What do I do now? I asked myself. I mustn't lose my nerve. That would never do.

Nothing happened. I hesitated to push forward. Suddenly with inexplicable strength, my mind recalled an incident in my childhood when I had slipped away from my nurse, and was lost. All my panic of that time suddenly overwhelmed me. I felt myself shivering. 'Nurse-ly, Nursely!' I shouted. At least I thought I shouted, though I could not hear my own voice.

'Come and get me, Nursely.' I was a child again calling my devoted old nanny by my funny name for her.

Suddenly I felt a hand grasp mine.

'Come along Johnnie,' said a voice.

Yet I could not see any person near me. Feeling or believing that there was a hand grasping mine, I made a tentative step into the light.

'Good!' came my old nanny's voice. 'Now we are all right.' I stared. Under the light,

clad in the old blue uniform was (or I thought was) my old nanny as she had looked over forty-odd years before.

I must be delirious, I told myself. But I found myself walking quietly along a path which led to a great bridge, stretching forward almost without end.

‘Come along,’ urged Nanny’s voice, ‘over the bridge.’

‘You’ll stay with me, Nursely?’ I whispered.

‘Of course.’

Clutching the hand that held mine, I stepped forward on to the bridge, and suddenly, I knew nothing more.

When consciousness returned, I was sitting in a garden. The most abundant and various species of flowers and plants were about me. And I was alone.

‘Mary,’ I called, thinking immediately of my wife. ‘Come and see this rose tree. . . . I’ve never seen such huge clusters of blossoms.’

‘Blossoms,’ said a voice, ‘you’ll see lots more like that here.’

‘I will?’ Suddenly I was aware of a person beside me.

‘Hello, John.’ The voice seemed to echo remembrances of the past. ‘Carried off that deal very well, didn’t you?’

‘Deal?’

‘Yes, like the one that ruined me.’

‘Ruined you? Nonsense.’

‘Sure,’ said the voice, ‘I’m Charlie Brooks. Remember?’

‘Charlie Brooks? But . . .?’

The form of a short, compact little man seemed to emerge in my consciousness.

‘But . . . You . . .’

‘Yes, I shot myself. Remember?’

I stared at the man before me. I was terrified. ‘You’re . . .?’

‘Dead? Yes. And so are you.’

‘No, no . . . dreaming, that is all.’

The words quivered through the peace of that lovely garden. My whole self rose in rebellion.

‘You’ll get used to it.’ Brooks chuckled. ‘We all do. . .’

I, the writer, stopped writing. The words had been a shock. Is death always so arid? I gasped mentally. By no means, came the telepathic answer from Frances. As you sow, so shall you reap.

I laid aside my pen. This was stern reality, I could write no more that day.

But the story pursued me. I watered and sprayed my pot plants to bring back my thoughts to my present life. It was no use. Even over lunch in the dining room, the story haunted me, so that I was absent minded in answering my neighbour's comments.

When I returned to my own room, I sat down to think about the writing. It was stark; but then truth is stark, and I had no doubt that this was truth. I had not even known what I was going to write when, my shopping morning walk over. I sat down at my desk. The story wrote itself just like all the other glimpses of the next life had written themselves in *Testimony of Light*. They were exactly in the style of Frances Banks. They held the stamp of authority. They grew, not from my conscious brain, but through the unconscious mind of true inspiration. Frances was indeed working.

The story continued as if there had been no physical halt in my writing.

'You caused your death!' John was saying.

'I didn't.' Charlie Brooks seemed to grin. 'I paid for it.'

As I wrote these words the man who had died from the stroke seemed to take over the story. I found I was writing his thoughts, his words.

'Well, you were a fool,' I was writing. 'You should have gone on and tricked me at the end.'

Charlie Brooks spoke thoughtfully. 'I could! From what I know now, that wouldn't have done either of us any good.'

'What does that mean?'

Charlie smiled at me. 'You'll see!' Then he took my arm.

'Now you'll need a rest. Afterwards - you'll be my responsibility.'

'What. . . !' Now I seemed to be shouting. Consciousness was blotted out. I remembered no more.

Then I, the interpreter, stopped writing. Stark justice, I thought to myself The idea of 'my brother's keeper' came to mind, as if Frances had been listening, and consciously following revelations, her thoughts, as always, wrote themselves. We are all one, she insisted, and then as if recalling the famous words, she spoke them to me: 'Every man's death diminishes me!'

I laid aside my pen. I, too, had much to think upon.

May Ellen's Story

Mary Ellen was born at the beginning of the twentieth century, to a strictly conventional Presbyterian couple.

They were solid, good living, slightly humdrum people, and their only child, Mary Ellen was brought up to fit the same mould. She was a good child, never got into trouble, and one who was never likely to 'set the Thames on fire', as people remarked.

Indeed, Mary Ellen was plain, sensible, rather dull but extremely kind. Religion meant a great deal in her life, and her prayers, fired by her compassion for the misfits and down-and-outs of the various societies, were for a chance to aid the poor and comfort the distressed.

In her teens she decided that she wanted to be a nurse. She would have loved to have been able to take a medical degree, for she admired doctors and their work. But she knew that the studying would be beyond her and the fees too heavy for her parents resources.

So a nurse it was! She was accepted as a probationer in a hospital not too far from home; she liked the life and the long hours did not worry her. It was the beginning of a career she wished to continue for life.

She passed her examinations and was promoted. Any time off-duty she returned home to her parents.

In 1939 she was prevented from volunteering for battle zone service in France because her mother had become ill with cancer. Her duty therefore was to stay near her parents, and she managed to get a transfer to a large hospital in her home town, to which the wounded soldiers were brought.

Mary Ellen, full of compassion, was much moved by their sufferings, and a little flattered and excited when her patients praised her. She had never had a boy-friend or even an admirer in her life until she fell in love with a young subaltern. It was painful for her to know that he was at least five years younger than she was, and that all his merry banter with her came from his gratitude.

She knew that he did not 'see' her as she felt she was inside herself, but knew only the plain, rather humdrum nurse who was understanding and helpful. Sometimes in secret she wept for a life that would never be hers, the experience of being loved, of marriage and children. But usually her religious beliefs gave her consolation. She would find her *métier* in service to others.

The young officer recovered from his wounds, presented her with a huge bouquet of flowers and a box of chocolates - a great treat! - and went back to his regiment promising to write to her, which, of course, he never did.

In 1945, the war was over, and Mary Ellen was forty-two. In that year her mother's fight against cancer ended, and she died peacefully with Mary Ellen beside her.

From that time, her father began to fail. He had retired and was now alone in the house. Mary Ellen managed to get a woman to come in twice a week, but before long it became obvious that he could not live alone, and she saw her duty. She gave up

nursing and came to look after him. He was bedridden for four years before he died, gasping out his gratitude to his daughter. By now she was nearing fifty.

At that time there was much unemployment; in any case she felt that she was too old to try to return to nursing. The home and a small income had been left to her. She decided to use this gratuity in helping others who had hard-luck stories. Her spare bedroom was rarely empty for long, and her common sense and nursing experience brought many of life's failures into her home and care.

Mary Ellen was a 'do-gooder', but without any airs or graces about her work. At sixty-two, she died of an internal cancer which she had ignored.

Mary Ellen arrived in the Thought World. After a long rest, she came to the rehabilitation centre. Here, Frances met her, and she now takes up the story.

I could understand, Frances says, how puzzled Mary Ellen was. For the first few times that we met, she took little notice of me, and I decided to let her start any approach. She moved automatically, seeming to jerk herself forward. It was quite obvious that she felt lost.

For several of my visits she made no attempt to contact me. The colours around her were dingy and they shivered about her. She did not know how to communicate, although it was apparent that she was aware of others with her.

I inquired whether she had met her parents, and the answer was that she had, but had not appeared to recognise them. I decided to communicate.

As I have tried to explain, we do not speak in sound, as the people on earth. We communicate by thought. I stayed close beside her, and presently it seemed that she noticed my presence, and had received my thought invitation to communicate. At once a flash of her thought touched mine. It was as if, in herself, she was asking the question that filled her. 'Am I dead?'

'Yes,' I relayed back.

'Is this heaven?' came the next urgent request.

'Not yet.'

'When?' she demanded.

'I cannot tell you that,' continued Frances, 'but this is the next world after your death in the earth world. You are in the World of Thought, and when you are ready you will find heaven for yourself.'

Mary Ellen did not appear satisfied and Frances felt it was better to leave her to think it over. But the colours about her were still dull, and she gave little sign of more interest. I left her in charge of one of the Sisters.

Mary Ellen was slow in reacting to the new world where she now found herself. Frances could see it was difficult for her to express strong constructive thought, for she had never spent much time in deep thinking during her busy life of service in the

other world.

The Helpers worked gently with her, but it was difficult to penetrate the cloud of depression and the dull mind. Her people visited her, and also found difficulty in breaking through these barriers. The father had progressed well, and was able to communicate, the mother more hesitant. Mary Ellen paid little attention, having found this new life so unlike her idea of what it would be. She had retreated into memories of the past experiences trying to recreate them anew.

Frances continued, slowly the colours of the Aura about her became less dingy, and then came the moment when she communicated with visible intention.

'I wish I had known more about this,' she said. 'It's so different from what I had expected.'

'But you gave your life in service,' prompted Frances, and Mary Ellen agreed.

'Did you really expect to get your reward in heaven immediately?'

'The Bible says so.'

'And you expected recognition and reward on arrival.'

'Yes,' agreed Mary Ellen, and that was evidently her belief. Frances felt that she had to correct this.

She went on, 'When you have learned more, Mary Ellen, you will be led into that happiness that your earth life has earned.'

'Oh, Sister, I am learning - indeed I am.'

Mary Ellen did not look back. She was on her way! Then the Doctor visited the centre and stopped beside her. They communicated easily. She was obviously pleased with his company, and he with hers. After that he came again, and Frances often met them together among the glorious flower gardens surrounding the Centre. She was animated and happy!

The Doctor was a shy man, and on earth he had been a good man, although a lonely one. A disastrous love affair in his student years had affected him badly, and he had never married. He too had led a segregated existence, sinking all his energies into his profession and his interest in rare plants for which he would search on foreign shores, bringing them back in triumph to his native land.

Now he was communicating much of his remembrances to Mary Ellen, and showing her the rare specimens they would discover in the surrounding country.

Two lonely souls were finding pleasure in each other's company, and Mary Ellen was blossoming.

Later she communicated to Frances, who again takes up the story.

The Doctor wants to return to earth, to continue the work he knows will need doing there,' Mary Ellen said, 'and he wants me to go back with him.'

The Doctor was beside her as she continued, her whole being shining with sudden beauty. 'We shall be together always from now on, wherever we have to go.'

When the Doctor left us, continued Frances, Mary Ellen came to me. 'I have found my reward in heaven.' She was shining with joy. For a moment she was visibly embarrassed.

'I give thanks to God indeed. I had never expected such reward and such happiness.'

I quote Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The Blessed Damosel* — it seems so appropriate.

And the stars in her hair were seven.

The Man who Loved Money

I was never troubled with too much money in my life, came my Inner Voice, and I knew that Frances was communicating with me.

When I was in the Convent all money paid to us for various services such as teaching, nursing, the publishing of books and pamphlets was naturally paid into the community funds. This kept us protected from any lure of fame or riches. Even after I left the community I was still very hard up, but the help I received from friends and well wishers gave me sufficient for my needs.

But, she continued, I have met souls here who had become prisoners of wealth, and have witnessed their difficulties in learning to adjust their lust for possessions to their inner life of the Spirit. The manner in which their earthly successes and slavery to money values has gradually subsided to its true position in the scales of life.

One such story is that of the man who loved money, the multi-millionaire who could not stop drawing more and more wealth into his bank accounts, and into his whole life. He was often ruthless in his bargains, which he continued making until his death as an old man. Always he counted and recounted his successes with a secret and all-pervading glorification.

As he grew older he became meaner, hugging his wealth, and fighting even judgments made against him for incomes to be paid to his two wives and the two sons and one daughter who were the issue of these marriages.

It was piteous to watch him when he arrived here, and his first endeavours to understand that a money-less existence was possible.

He 'rested' for what my readers might think was a long period of time. Here, it seemed like 'a morning gone' to us.

After his extended 'sleep' he was guided to this Centre where I still carry out some duties, and thus we met and talked. There are nurses and teachers there and slowly our poor deluded miser learned that money had no value, except as an instrument of commerce, and here there was no necessity for commerce. This was a sad blow, but he recovered from it. Later came the period acknowledging his debts to humanity

and a deep desire to give aid to the poor and struggling still in the earth world.

It was the first step towards future development, so nobody interfered with his desires. Usually, we must take our first steps towards living happily in this World of Thought, and we are never thwarted in the furtherance of our plans. So it came about that the miser rejected the fascination of personal wealth, and concentrated his thoughts on charity.

I did not see our new arrival during several visits, said Frances. He appeared content, with his mind deep in concentration and planning. One could almost imagine him back in the business world, urged on by the lure of a new concept.

'Hello,' I greeted him. He seemed to stare beyond me and I saw what appeared to be tears.

'Sadness,' I asked, 'in this lovely garden?'

'Failure' - he nodded.

'Oh, come!' I encouraged, 'not that.'

'I'm a fool,' Sister.

I could distinguish the dark cloud about him.

'I was going to do so much and my plan worked - too well. I kept it to myself. I never did tell anyone when I was out for anything big.'

'Like an oil merger?'

'Yes, Sister. Like a take-over, only this time I was giving away money. I found a deserving family in the East End of London. A man with little money, no work, and small prospect, a wife and two children. A fine family. They deserved better.'

'Yes,' I agreed.

'Well, I concentrated all my thought on them. I imagined some of my wealth (and I had so much) going to them. I even prayed that by some miracle it could. I thought about it continually. I imagined them well off, happy in their own home with their children at good schools - all the advantages I had had. It worked. The husband won the pools and the whole thing was an utter failure.'

Frances was becoming aware of a Presence beside them. 'They found the money was of no use?' The question was asked by the Visitor.

Our new 'charity-organiser' drooped like a branch half-severed from its mother tree. 'They went mad with it, spent the money unwisely - rushed about, invested, gambled, flung the wealth that once had been mine about like maniacs. The husband got into bad company. He began to drink and, being unused to alcohol, the spirit mastered him. There were quarrels, harsh scenes with his wife. The children were unhappy. Oh ... oh ... I never would have believed! It was all so dreadful, so degrading. . . .

'And then?' It was the Visitor's question.

'Then - they lost a lot of money on a foolish bet - and suddenly, most of it - had gone.'

There was a silence.

'So,' it was the Visitor's words, 'you had been playing God - and?'

'And I had never realised the responsibility . . .' began the... 'Of course!' but there was great gentleness in the reproof, 'how could you.'

After a silence the Visitor went on. 'But this does show that you still believe in the power of money. You are right of course, my friend, money has power - for good and for evil.'

'But I had not realised the evil! I was trying only to give back what I had . . . stolen from others.'

The Visitor seemed to consider. 'There is no punishment here,' he explained. 'You have made your own hell in your mind.' 'But those poor people?' persisted the do-gooder.

'Ah, yes! They will learn their lesson, and find a truer way of life. We will send help to open their spiritual eyes to the proper way of living - that of earning one's living and of treating such gifts in the true way.' The Visitor's words were gentle.

'I fear you brought almost a volcano about yourself, but it cannot destroy you. Only you yourself can do that. You have learned a hard lesson.'

Now, the Visitor was addressing me. 'He needs rest, Sister, and love and understanding. You will take him to his future home?'

I bowed slightly and the Presence seemed to dwindle and leave.

Later I guided our learner to the hills of beauty and peace. He was silent, apprehensive of what was in store for him. We did not communicate.

The hills were green and quiet, their slopes glowing with the blue of harebells, and the pink of clover. Presently we came upon a lush valley. Nestling in its folds was a little white house, its walls surrounded by gardens of flowers. A woman came from the door to meet us. She was tall and straight, and walked towards us with a quiet grace. The two souls met and looked fully at one another.

'My son!' breathed the lady, and held out her hands. 'Mother! Oh, Mother!'

It was a cry from the very soul, a gasp that held both relief, love and joy.

'Come home,' she smiled. 'Come home, my dear!' And she drew him towards the gardens of the house.

I turned away. Yet, as I went, I heard the quiet voice say in the most placid matter-of-fact tones, which must have been like balm upon the unquiet spirit beside her.

‘You always loved flowers. Come - and see these here.. ..’

I left them, said Frances, with the knowledge that the cement of earth had been washed away from our newcomer and he was on his way to the discovery of the Spirit of Light.

The Policeman's Dilemma

He was a good policeman. He was well trained, confident and fearless, with the determination to win promotion in his chosen career.

He was born in a southern country of Europe, and had lived in the same town all his life, quite content with his lot. Not possessing an imaginative or creative brain he did not read much apart from the daily tabloids and his own manual of deportment and behaviour for the policing of a designated neighbourhood. He was a just man, and mostly very kind, although strict with aggressive offenders.

At the age of twenty-eight he fell in love and married a pleasant home-loving young woman in her early twenties. They set up house and were happy. When he learned that his wife was expecting her first child his delight overflowed.

‘A boy! Oh, it’ll be a lad! I’m sure of that,’ he told her. He would listen to no possibility of being mistaken, and when her time came his wife was indeed delivered of a male child, a dark-haired boy resembling its father.

‘Chief of the police, he’s going to be! I know it,’ he cried. And indeed the child was strong and healthy.

Then came the troubles in the city, the riots, the beginning of a terrorist group, new squads of protective police, and all the new and only partly successful measures to deal with their crimes.

One spring day the policeman was called to the scene of a fight between several terrorist groups. With other members of the Force, he went boldly in to the defence of the town. The rival group ran away, the other turned on the upholders of the Law. The policeman, having caught one of the outlaws, was pulling him towards the waiting car when another terrorist rushed forward to try to release the prisoner. Another officer dived into the affair and the squabble became a bitter fight.

Suddenly the policeman felt a sharp pain in his back, released his hold, and fell to the ground. He saw the other officer draw his gun and shoot his attacker as he turned to escape.

‘He’s killed the bastard,’ was his last thought before unconsciousness overcame him. He was dead before he reached hospital, stabbed to the heart from behind.

This is the story that Frances has just told me. Indeed she has prompted the words of my account.

Poor chap, I thought. How terrible.

Yes, agreed my Inner Voice. Terrible indeed! Yet his plight is even worse now.

Worse! I thought. It couldn't be. He was brave, wasn't he? And he was only doing his duty.

Frances seemed to agree.

Wait, she communicated.

So, having finished my breakfast, I sat back to listen.

Our policeman, she began, when he realised what had happened to him, was furiously, unappeasably angry.

'My happy life is ended,' he mourned. 'I'll not see my boy grow up. My dear wife is alone. It is an abomination - stabbed to death by a terrorist. I'm not ready to be dead. I would never have believed God would permit such a dreadful ending to my life. I've always been obedient and faithful to my Church. I believed in God's love.'

This was not God's doing, we tried to tell him, but wicked men who were trying to escape from justice for their crimes. 'Your killer was shot by your protector. . .

'I know! I'm glad!'

Suddenly he was silent. About him there seemed to gather black, angry clouds.

'If he's over here anywhere, I'll find him, the bastard. If there's any way I can settle my lot with him I'll do it. I'll make him pay! I'll . . .'

'You can't kill him, you know,' one of our meeting Squad informed him.

The policeman digested this. 'I can't? I'll find a way to do worse than that. . . .' Then, suddenly overcome with his grief he wept. 'My son - I'll never see my son again. I'll never watch him grow up. . .'

Frances paused.

And did he? I could not help asking. What happened?

Hatred! Anger for revenge has no place here, was the reply. Our poor brave policeman has fallen upon the very horns of his dilemma - the longing to see his beloved son, and the lust to crucify his murderer.

I was silent - shocked. And . . . ? I waited.

And his own mind is keeping him in a hell of his own making. He is earthbound. . . .

I was horrified. Like my little servant in my cottage, that I wrote about in *Wheel of Eternity*, I suggested.

Not quite the same. Frances was silent for some minutes. She was earthbound through her ignorance and the comfort she had discovered still inhabiting your cottage. Our policeman has imprisoned himself by his imagination. He lives in his own hell of revenge and is tortured by his longing for his son. He has become earthbound. He cannot bear to renounce the material world and his good life, and he

lusts for revenge. Poor creature, he is in his own self-induced prison, looking for the satisfaction of personal revenge and the longing for earthly possession of his baby son. Poor unquiet spirit.

And can nothing be done to help him? I interposed.

We are helping, of course, was the reply.

How?

By our prayers and thoughts, and admiration of his bravery, and by our understanding of his dilemma.

How long will he be earthbound? I persisted.

Until he himself makes his decision. Like everyone, he has free will. He cannot live in two places at once, and his possible term of material life has been ended. Tragically, we must admit. But his soul must go on to the new life of the Spirit. He has also to find peace and release from his absorption with the past.

His 'lower' or material mind is keeping him a prisoner in a hell of his own imagination. Thus he has become earthbound and intransigent to any suggestion of renouncing his desire for revenge on his murderer.

And the terrorist? I asked. What of him?

He is in the lower regions of this world. A sad region of which I spoke in *Testimony of Light* where hardened criminals work out their penances. I have been working in tragic regions, and will write of them more in another chapter. But the terrorist and his victim's paths will not cross until both have found peace, and realise that they are prolonging their own tragedies.

But the policeman was attacked. He did no wrong. I protested.

Of course, agreed my mentor, he has every right to be with us in the Rehabilitation Centre (your term). Here he can solve his dilemma, that is, if he forgives his attacker, and . . .

And forgets his wife? I interrupted the chain of thought, angrily. I could almost feel Frances' displeasure.

Of course not! I began to write. He will never forget their love, or that for his son. But it is a selfish, self-pitying emotion at the present. We are surrounding him with blessings and understanding and peace. At the moment he is an unquiet soul. We pray that he will be enabled to end his own dilemma and discover the Spirit of Good, of Love and of Peace which we term God. I am sure that he will be helped to do this as others have found the Light of the Spirit in similar circumstances before him.

I trust so, too, I found myself thinking. But how?

Help will be given to him. Do you recall, Helen, the old lady in your cottage, who was earthbound, and had been for some forty or fifty years of earth time? The one you

wrote about in *Wheel of Eternity*.

I nodded.

Well, you were sent to that cottage to help her. She was not afraid of you, nor bitter towards you. Also, she was happy enough where she was - not exactly an unquiet soul - only an ignorant and mystified one.

This was correct, and I waited.

The power of the Spirit helped her to see her mistake, and to go forth on her journey, and the imminence of that Power had been intensified by those good nuns who had heard your story at a Conference, and had informed you of the future prayers they would make each evening for her recovery and release. Prayer and meditation, especially group prayer, is a potent power of the Spirit. Your old woman went on her way - slowly and fearfully, but after her own prayers she met her father. The Light of the Spirit is a potent force for Good. Sadly, the material life lacks true belief in this Spiritual Life Force. . . .

Here I had to leave my writing. But the questions still remained in my consciousness and later, when Frances answered them.

Yes, there are such souls imprisoned in their own tragedies who still inhabit the scenes of those events, in their sufferings or their foul deeds. You call them ghosts. We know them as unquiet Spirits. They haunt the earth, and are sometimes malicious, but are often but sad wraiths of themselves. Mankind fears them, although he has no cause to do so. They are exorcised - and sometimes sent on their way. A better method would be to try to understand their predicament and send Love and Light and Positive Thought to them - even to speak to them in your thoughts and to encourage them to look for the Light. They will slowly respond, and begin to open their minds. And there are Spirits here, advanced souls, ready to receive and help them, and bring them from darkness to Light.

Frances finished her chapter with the following impressive thought.

We are not the Creator, but the created. We will make innumerable voyages towards the Creator before we truly discover in ourselves that Spirit of Creation. We are travellers in Eternity from evolution to involvement to unity with each other and with the Eternal Spirit. We have only a child's perception towards the Great Spiritual Mystery in our present process of evolution.

CHAPTER VII

Service and Judgment

Frances Banks

'All service ranks the same with God' wrote Robert Browning.

This Truth is one which the new arrival in this plane of consciousness discovers

sooner or later; and which he establishes in his own understanding. Only by his own efforts and searchings into the value of his recent life on earth can this Truth become clear to his assessment of his successes or failures.

Many there are; indeed, a vast proportion of these released souls cannot face the bare evaluation of their material lives. And there is no persuasion by others to do so whether they are loved ones, or past, despised and hated enemies. And the great souls, whom we reverence as the Masters of Wisdom never interfere, even though, with silent understanding, they seek to ignite the flame of the Spirit in such dull souls or frightened souls, or complacent souls who refuse to face the inevitable.

The Spirit of God the Creator in man embraces all branches of the Spirit, such as the Spirit of Beauty, which embraces Art, Music, Poetry and progress, achievement, even sacrifice where such was for good, truth, love, wisdom, and such attributes which sometimes startle the world with their greatness, yet often seem to be . . . 'born to blush unseen, and waste its sweetness on the desert air.'

Here, in this consciousness, there is no line of differentiation between the earthly service of a President or a Prime Minister, or of the less triumphant service of a humble server, a worker among the poor, a humble priest, a nurse, a loving wife and a wise and gentle mother, devoting her life to encouraging the budding talents in her children, and the imparting to them the true values of life.

When the soul finally departs from the material body and renounces all desires and achievements longed for by the limited materialistic thinking of the human mind, it finds itself purged of the whole experience, as though it had been a dream. Desire evaporates within it, achievement, honour, power are seen in a completely different context.

This is the body's first reaction after death. The soul is, as it were, naked in its new surroundings, exactly as the human child comes unclothed into earth consciousness.

Death and birth are closely and inevitably related. Birth is the beginning of eventual death: and death is the advent into, as well as the return, to the consciousness of the Spirit.

It depends on how deeply and utterly the Spirit has descended into the restricted earth consciousness for the Reality of the Spirit to become recognised.

In the first stages of life here, the newly-arrived soul is often bewildered, and needs much care. Usually - there are naturally exceptions - the soul, after greeting its loved ones and revelling for the moment in its own recovery from pain and release from earth restrictions, feels the need for rest.

Then, it 'retires' into Itself to rest and recover. During this experience, in environments of great beauty and peace, it is tended by souls trained for such service. How long, in earth terms, they may extend their stay depends upon many factors - the usefulness or the wastefulness of their lives, their achievements or their

failures, and the strength and purpose of the soul. Sometimes this rest is lengthy, sometimes a short period will eventuate in realisation, understanding, and the desire to learn more and to understand, even fractionally, the meaning, responsibility and attainment so far, of the soul.

As the children of earth learn to walk, talk and write and to live in this new and restricted consciousness, so the souls here learn to 'be', to know, and to grow into the wider realisation of the Reality of Life which never ends. Slowly, and with infinite wonder, our true selves realise and marvel at the Divine Experiment of soul essence descending into coarse matter, so as to evolve through experience back into the Eternal from which they came.

This great Experiment has already advanced, and been retarded by failure to advance again for millions of our light years. Man can visualise no end to it. Only the Creator Himself, the Originator, the Spirit Itself can watch, and maybe monitor, as He evaluates progress with failures.

This Reality is realised here by all creeds and races alike. For all religions have a belief in a Power, a Spirit Force which is all-embracing and eternal.

In the Halls of Learning, of Art, Medicine, Music, individuals of all races shed their differences and work together as teams. This is the World of the Spirit, not the plane of differing nationalities.

For younger souls who have yet to experience much material existence, living here either with their families, loved ones and friends, or in peaceful harmony, the soul is experiencing the 'essence' of the Spirit. When they are ready, they offer themselves for service in the many fields open to them, or they choose to learn and experience in the spirit of progress in the great halls.

Many souls have been here for hundreds of your earth years. But time does not matter. They will advance when they are ready.

For this is the World of the Spirit, not the limited experience of material existence. There is no untimely hurry, and no soul is allowed to proceed beyond the stature to which he has attained.

Even during periods of intense advancement and achievement in the Universities of the Spirit, a soul contributes also to the 'charitable' help with those of his brothers who have not advanced so far on the path.

Learning, advancement and service here count for the life of the Spirit. Here we learn that the Spirit is the very force without which life has no meaning, either in the material world or here in the Thought World. It is, or should be, the corner-stone of our very existence. This Spirit of God (Good) is always part of us, always the inner secret energy, whether we are aware of it or not. It does not leave us when the body dies. Indeed, with the freedom from restrictions of the material life, the Spirit is released to greater understanding.

Yet, this is not an easy change for new arrivals in this world. Indeed, the writer of this book has had this very thought 'conveyed' to her by a dear friend, who had recently 'died'.

'I wish I had known more about this new world,' she was told by her friend. 'It is very difficult to understand.'

Also from the lips of a young girl of about fourteen years of age. 'My aunt came to me and told me who she was' - the girl had never seen her relation. 'She said she had been "over there" for twenty-five of our years. She said it had been difficult but I am happy now.'

Because our beliefs in heaven or hell have been based on material conceptions, those souls who have arrived and are just arriving, have difficulty in understanding or assessing their new conditions without having previously 'recognised' the Inner Spirit within them.

Thus, the surprise and probable consternation that all service ranks the same with God, hinders their advancement. On earth, men and women are raised to honour for their devotion to duty and service. Wealth is earned by good service and ease of living, responsibility and fame.

In the next World, or so I have learned, such honours as attained here, are, like the money fortunes built up, to be discarded with the human faculties. They rank equally with the successes of a good mother, a painstaking loyal servant, or a humble curate serving his God in obscurity and dull routine. An understanding of the Purpose behind such a Law is, no doubt, difficult and slow to observe. But, so, too, must be the realisation of the fact that we are there to learn, to discover who and what we are, and thus to assess our lives and our experiences as in the life of the Spirit.

I feel that in closing this part of the chapter by quoting the full extract from Robert Browning's glorious poem, *Pippa Passes*, such understanding as will prepare our souls for the life after death will be made clear.

All Service ranks the same with God.

With God - whose puppets best and worst

Are we; there is no last or first.

The soul of man is its judge and its jury. Our earth lives are not just moments of experience, but inevitable patterns in Eternity.

Earth life reveals the progress of the soul in years of happy successful service or in failure to fulfil its own spiritual pattern.

When death occurs and life ends, the soul passes on to further experience. The darkness of earth consciousness, which has not been penetrated by the light of the Spirit, clings to the soul newly released from the human body.

Jesus in his Ministry on earth spoke of the next life quite clearly.

In my Father's house, he taught, places were prepared for everyone and we would each go to the place prepared for us. The word 'place' in this connection is difficult. For the next world is not a place, but rather a state of consciousness.

Thus, higher the wider, the more compassionate, self-effacing and spiritually advanced the soul, the more beautiful is the place, or the consciousness, to which it is drawn.

Surely, if we think this fact through, we arrive at its truth and 'Heaven' is our destination.

In this world, soul level has been blocked and blackened by what we term as sin which we recognise as cruelty, greed, jealousy, licentiousness, and perversion of the truth.

Souls at all stages of growth pass through this Thought World. Whether they choose to stay here in the dark shadows of the lower worlds, *or* in the uplands of peace and rest and opportunities for growth, is a matter of their own choice.

As you know, I, Frances Banks, longed to enter the Halls of Learning and, in my ignorance, found myself dwindling back safely to my own level. There are no rules or regulations, or compulsions. The growing spirits are taken by their thought processes to their true places, according to the record they have brought with them. In simple language, 'bringing in the sheaves', illustrates the process of direction to the place 'prepared for them'.

The souls, who offer their services in that lower world, essay to show these prisoners the Light ahead. Yet their task is difficult. The soul so reduced, and enslaved by sin, cannot bear the Light. In their poor minds they believe that the darkness hides them.

Here I, the writer, would like to interpose the story of a strange, unhappy dream, which I had whilst writing this book, but *before* the writing of this chapter!

I was deeply asleep, yet I knew in a vague way that I was dreaming. I found myself in a horrible place where there were creatures whose ugliness appalled me. I was frightened by the brutality that seemed to emanate from them. How I had managed to penetrate this dark, unpleasant world I did not know. But there I was shrinking from any contact, terrified and trembling at their approach to me.

Inwardly, I was calling out for help. How long I was in this dark drear hole, I could not know. But suddenly, continuing the dream, I was aware of Frances Banks, clothed, as I thought, in the nun's robes she had worn, but which I had never seen on the earthly plane. She stood by a kind of wall at the far end of this dark place. Quickly I called out to her, 'Frances, Frances,' and, as so often happens in the sleep state, I was immediately beside her.

But to my intense surprise, she turned on me sharply. 'Helen! What are you doing here? *Go away.*'

I remember that I stood still staring at her in dismay. I could not tell her how I had got there. Also her greeting had not been what I might have expected.

'Go away! You are not ready for this - you must not come here! Go away.'

I was so upset and terrified that I began to cry. And at that moment I awoke.

'I have been in the lower worlds,' I told myself. I wonder why I had wanted to go there. Yet I was not surprised at Frances' reaction. I had known that she was a helper there. Was that why I had managed to project my thought to her? Maybe in some future time I, too, would help there. But now I was not ready. I felt ashamed and accepted her reproof.

CHAPTER VIII

The Kingdom of Heaven

One morning I sat down in my accustomed chair, closed my eyes, and emptied my mind of all personal thoughts.

This is a most difficult exercise, and after many years of practice there are only times, rare moments of wonder, when one's everyday pressure of triviality loosens its grip of the mind, and one becomes aware of the Presence of the Spirit.

In such rare glimpses of reality, the whole self becomes suffused with a joy that is inexplicable. The entire self is! One is! The Kingdom of Heaven, the Christ Spirit is within the mind, the heart and the self. Silent prayer begins it, silence fosters it, the self absorbs the mind, and awareness is! One Knows!

The moment of one-ness is! It may last a few minutes. It may stay in its ecstasy for a few hours.

The Truth, the one-ness, the unity, the joy of the Spirit, the authority and Power of the Spirit encompass the mind to its inexplicable wonder.

In that moment, I felt I knew the travail of the human mind so immersed in the triviality of the body mind as to be completely unaware of the Spirit within him. But then came the thought of progress and advancement offered freely to all, but

perhaps only realised in its immediacy by the few. They were, and are, the great men of the past and the present, Masters of their Art, their Science, their inventions for the world's progress, their music for the soul's refreshment, their glorious monuments and buildings in honour of the Spirit. From time immemorial as we measure it, these Masters have known that Spirit, worked with the internal one-ness with that Spirit and advanced inwardly towards the Centre and Heart of that Spirit, which we call God.

Such men were Masters acknowledged, or sometimes reviled and rejected, for their inspiration beyond human knowledge. They were men who worked with the Spirit in entire unity: Browning, Tennyson, Milton, Homer, Dante, Mozart . . . the inspirers of

others more deeply immersed in the trivialities of the world, the flesh and the allurements of Mammon.

As I sat with closed eyes, aware only of the close consciousness of the Spirit which is the whole or holy self within us, the faces of these great men flashed before me.

Masters! These advanced souls must be living — and progressing and working somewhere — whether in this Universe of ours or in some other Land of Promise.

The theory that we were 'born in the image of God' can surely be interpreted by the explanation that we emerged from that Centre which is God the Spirit. Could it not be that we emerged from this Centre and travelled outwards, passing further and further from its one-ness, until God the Spirit calls us back to the Heart?

Difficult, laborious and slow, as we return to our Father, we fail often to the Hound of Heaven. Yet those we reverence as Masters have heard the Voice calling and advanced into the Light. Surely in their purity of Spirit and their compassion for those of us still struggling to follow, these Masters and Saints and Great Ones encourage and augment our search for that Holy Grail within us?

These men and women are surely Centres of the Inner Light, and from them must emerge the new inspirations which enlighten the darkness of our world at times, and enlighten us at those periods of the greatest darkness?

The Saints, the Masters, the great and pure Souls have surely merited our reverence and our devotion to the Work, past and present in pointing the way.

This was so in other ages of religious thinking in the old Catholic faith. Why not today when most of mankind is lost in the dark lure of earthly riches and the power of the mind?

At the end of this century, which is fast approaching, there will still be time to change our thoughts, our ways and our moral decadence, and to learn to benefit by the examples that have suffered and advanced into the Centre, which is the Light of God.

'Let us honour great men' (and, I would add, women), but further still let us study them and their way of enlightenment. Let us know, within ourselves, that they are part of the Spirit which is, as the greatest Master of all told us, within each one of us. They can enlighten us if we listen, they can show us the way to the Stars which they have trod. For they live still, and are part of our great evolution back to the 'trailing clouds of glory' from which we have all emerged.

One morning I was sitting quietly in my room, eating my breakfast, when suddenly and quite without warning, the voice of Frances Banks was entirely audible. She was speaking to me, as plainly as if she too was enjoying her tea and toast beside me. Only her voice was within my brain, and not engaging my physical hearing. I listened for a while, whilst proceeding with my meal. This was the old Frances I had known - practical, positive, and confident as she had always been, only now the

content, the intent of her words was arresting. I felt like a student of the Higher Philosophy. I was certainly and intentionally being taught, and soon I realised that Frances meant her words to be written into this book. Indeed, she was almost dictating.

‘The psychic and the Spiritual,’ she began, ‘are both steps in the Jacob’s ladder of progression. The earth-experience is possibly one of the lower steps of ascendancy. Most incarnate beings are on that level, and thus their minds become overwhelmed by the difficulty in realising what is true and what is inexplicable to them at their level of understanding.

‘My first important point is that they are both a continuation of the progressive nature of man.

‘Humanity which is at different stages of evolution in its journey towards the stars, or into a higher level of attainment, consists of entities which are triple natured. For instance, man is animal, human and spiritual.

‘In successive waves of progress, it is shown that the great souls, the masters, the saints, and great interpreters of the Spirit have evolved from the animal instincts to the human level at its highest, whilst truly the masses remain totally unaware of much beyond higher animal intelligence, the animal nature and the total acceptance of the creature life. Yet it must be accepted that even among such groups there are individuals who have a sensitivity within them that is aware of beings and Beings beyond the limited understanding of the masses. Amongst these are the psychics, the natural healers, as well as those who study the writings of the Sensitives (such as saint Teresa of Avilla) throughout the ages.

‘The person with psychic awareness, often called a medium, is frequently uneducated, poor and retiring. These people can and do contact the newly dead, and sometimes the spirits of family connections who have for years (in our time) inhabited the next world of consciousness. Yet often they seem to have advanced little and their messages seem to be paltry and trivial.

‘But should we condemn them, or take superior amusement from their words? I do not think so! I have witnessed the slow growth made by many souls. It is not for anyone to be superior about these spirits who long to get a chance to contact loved ones still on earth. Neither have we the right or the wish to forbid such moments of correspondence. However, when money comes into the practice of this communication, we see the danger.

‘But who can judge the comfort and help that can be given to a sorrowing soul on the earth plane. I recall my own joy when my dear mother first communicated with me.

‘There is no condemnation of the help given, as long as the recipient does not allow this form of converse to become a drug on his own way of life, or to approach the psychic world in a spirit of fortune telling.

‘Since my own arrival into this consciousness, I have become aware of the pitfalls of this haphazard employment of spirit communication. In the opinion of many here, the dangers could be much remedied by the Christian Churches. We feel that there should be a place for sensitives who are Christians to work within.

‘How often has a clergyman, completely unaware of or opposed to the psychic gift, been quite unable to help and give true comfort after the death of a relative? I myself had to weigh my words, until I discovered the possibilities of communication.

‘Such mediums working within the Church, respected and protected by the Church would, I am certain, do great service in bringing this controversial subject into the open. Surely the Bible speaks openly of ‘gifts of the Spirit’, their use and their safeguards?

‘But communication and assurance by converse with spirits has little to do with the worship of, and obedience to the Spirit of all life, which Jesus called His Father and who indeed is the Creator of us all.

‘Surely our Jacob’s ladder is the approach, step by step, to the realisation of our oneness with the Reality of God’s Creative Spirit? Jesus taught that we were made in the likeness of that Spirit. Poets speak of “Trailing clouds of glory do we come, From Heaven that is our home”, and have likened the Spirit to the “Hound of Heaven”, watching over us, caring for us and waiting for the soul within us to acknowledge Him.

‘Here, in this world, we are spirit in Spirit, yet not at the Heart of Spirit. Our consciousness still needs to undo many mistakes already made and to advance onwards towards the Centre.

‘Those who are in spirit can and often do send messages of hope back to the world which they have left. But that is not the same as one-ness with the Spirit of God the Eternal. Even here we all go on ascending that Jacob’s Ladder. Even here there are passports to the Higher levels - but each of us has to earn them in order to - as the world would describe it - “join the Immortals”.

‘For Immortals there are and always will be. And if it has needed millions of years of trial and error, of action and non-action, of self or others, of God or Mammon, does that but signify the slow progress, of animal through human to Spirit?

‘Time has no substance. Spiritual man will evolve as and when the Law of Progress is ready. There is a maxim which I still remember from my earth experience, and which I apply now to the Spiritual Law: Nothing can stop an idea when its time has come. In other words, when the next step is ready to be taken, nothing can stop it.

‘One realises and learns over here to apply the Law to every thought and action. By so doing the spirit grows sufficiently to be ready for the next step.

‘We are not rushed into Paradise. It is there before us - whether immediate or protracted in our way ahead - and we pass onward into the many mansions in my

Father's house, as described by Jesus.

'But the Spirit levels us according to our worth, and the Great Souls and Masters can descend to our level for communication and teaching.

'On your earth plane the term spiritual has a different meaning. A spiritual man is often described as a man identified with his religion, whereas in this consciousness, a spiritual man is one who has discovered and lives within the Spiritual part of him.

'Religions on the earth plane, which often refuse to acknowledge each other, have all evolved from the need for the growing human to know and work with the Spirit of God within him. Let me quote from the great works of Robert Browning who *Knew*.

*There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness;
. . . And to know rather consists of opening out a Way,
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape. . . .*

'When, on the plane of earth, this Truth is known and followed, then will spiritual man evolve, and the psychic reach upwards to the spiritual, to the very core of life itself.

CHAPTER IX

Reincarnation

The acceptance of and belief in a further life after death, not of eternal bliss, but in the reality of judging one's own mistakes and realising one's own failures in the earth experience, yet with gratitude and joy acknowledging one's successes, gratefully gathering the harvest of service, must encourage a new attitude towards the inevitable termination by death of the human experience.

But to what purpose? In this modern age of technological developments beyond our dreams, and of experiments which are undermining old knowledge and practices, shall we continue to persist in agreeing with a prospect of the darkness and finality of the grave, or of a paradise of eternal bliss with the Christ whom humanity disbelieved and crucified?

Such ideas will not stand intellectual or spiritual proving; they by-pass the possibility of onward progress or of any opportunity to develop what we know intuitively to be our true self. Eternal bliss in a paradise where nothing seems to be expected of one appears static and unfulfilling. Bodily extinction is equally unsatisfactory since it blots out for ever all personal efforts, all sacrifices made and all meaning to life.

If the human soul is to accept the possibility that it must have a meaning. There should be an aim, a sense of reflection and a purposeful drive towards forgiveness

and understanding of wrong doing, as well as fulfilment of neglected attainments of progress in all departments of life, either of the body or the soul.

A man, for instance, with the music of the spheres in his soul, but who had been unable to attain the experience of imparting such by composition would surely long for another chance.

Similarly, the poet, the artist, the sculptor, the writer, whose gifts had expired within him, unexpressed for many reasons, would wish to learn the why and wherefore of such failure. As would every woman who had longed for but never experienced the joy of motherhood.

This earth world in which we live, startles us at times with the very perfection of all its attributes, animal, vegetable, floral, human. Is this due to our evolution through the centuries? Or is there an eternal and spiritual purpose of growth both animal and spiritual that evolved it?

Is man a puppet or a living organism, a speck of spirit from some divine Source with a far distant and enlivening process of perfection?

Have we no 'second chances' beyond these three score years and ten?

Surely the Divine Creator has designed a Plan whereby we ourselves work out our destination? Nothing is wasted. Therefore our potential which takes time, experience, application, success and disaster to fulfil will have been provided for by more than a single experience of living in a material world?

Let me quote, as an example of my thesis, the story of a youngish man who had the inspiration of the artist, the gifts of colour, the technique and the determination to fulfil them.

I met this young man and his wife many years ago. I was tremendously impressed both by him and his work. He was obviously inspired by one of the great Masters. I felt he would go far. So I was delighted when I received an invitation to a London exhibition of his paintings.

He came over to talk to me, and showed me a sketch of a great canvas he had planned. It was ambitious but, with his deep colour effects, I knew it would be striking and beautiful.

'I shall work all the year at it,' he told me, 'and submit it to the Royal Academy next season.' I wished him luck.

From that time I neither saw nor heard from him or his wife. Time passed and the Academy opened. I travelled to London to see the exhibition.

But there was no such picture, indeed nothing by him at all. I was disappointed and worried. Later I spoke to a friend.

'Oh,' she said, 'he ran into trouble. He isn't painting at all now.'

Disappointed, and sad for him, I enquired of the friend who had first brought them

to my notice. She told me the following story.

It appeared that despite his talent, he had failed to earn sufficient money to support himself and his family. He took a position in a government office, meaning to paint in the evenings and holidays.

In the office there was a pretty young woman. They became friendly. Quickly their friendship developed into an infatuation. He began to neglect his work, and to spend all his time with his new sweetheart. Their affair grew stronger.

Winter passed then spring, and the beginning of summer, and the great canvas stood in his tiny studio still only half completed.

Academy time came. But he had nothing to show. Perhaps he realised that he had lost his chance and that his picture would be untopical for a later showing; perhaps his nerves were on edge, or maybe the infatuation was over. One does not know. I only know that he and his girl quarrelled, and soon she was off with another man.

Then, to the soul of the artist came the intensity and the enormity of his future. He had a nervous breakdown, during which he was lovingly tended by the wife whom he had betrayed. When he regained his health, he knew that he would never paint again. Some years later he died, one of life's unhappy failures.

Is the failure of this unfulfilled soul to be his only chance of fulfilment? What if he could . . .

Sit in a golden chair

And paint with brushes of camel hair, in some paradise of eternal bliss?

Would that bring fulfilment? Or would his soul demand another chance in the more difficult material of earth?

Can we not envisage the progress made in the spiritual world by such a soul, as he judges himself for the carnal weakness that broke him? Is it not possible that in a return to earth with this new-found strength he would conquer the weakness that had betrayed him, and fulfil his artistic potential?

This is the meaning of re-incarnation; re-birth with future chances towards progress. Does that not make sense?

Have we not regretted the stupid, unthinking mistakes we have made during our lives? Have we all not wished for a second chance?

If we understood this process of returning with greater understanding for a second chance, would we not try harder - and probably succeed?

The trouble is that the 'waters of Lethe' close over the newly-embodied soul. It forgets. Yet does it?

For, in those moments when we are about to take the wrong path, or to do the wrong thing, the soul remembers and tries to warn us. If then we do not listen, the

responsibility for the failure which will ensue is all our own.

God did not make us to be puppets. He gave us free will. It is that freedom of will which we have to master and direct.

Surely, a life-after-death which teaches us how to govern and train our free will into the acceptance of the right path is of greater consequence than a Paradise, or an eternity of bliss.

Our free will is our greatest asset, for it strengthens us; and have we not been given our conscience and its prompting to guide us? Surely we can align the inner conscience murmurings and its warnings, as the soul itself prompts our actions.

God *is*, and His Spirit is within us. Is it realistic to accept the idea of only one short life on earth in which we have to learn so much? Is it not feasible that, when we have reviewed our lives, examined our mistakes, and assessed our successes, the Spirit within us will urge us to try again, and, we hope, do better.

How can such masters of their art be born, with that gift already well-established? Surely this is no accident of nature?

It occurs to me that in our thinking we need to look beyond this one life - perhaps to many experiences of material living, in which the soul has persevered through failures, trials, successes and hopes while desirous of achieving the mastery of the work it loves.

Mozart at the age of six gave piano recitals in public. Can we not understand and appreciate that many returns to material life and experience could have been the background experience of this 'old soul' in the body of the young composer: the soul which went on to fulfil itself, and to leave to the world his glorious music.

So many people set their minds against the idea of re-birth in this planet.

Frances does not answer that question definitely. 'There are other worlds,' she agrees, but as yet she knows little of them, and feels it unnecessary at this stage to try to discover more. 'If and when I choose,' she says, 'or I am advised to return for another term of material living, I think that I would want to come back to a world I had known. But that may not be possible, and I do not care to philosophise on a return yet. There is much I need to investigate and learn about; and I have certainly learned to curb my impatience for further knowledge until I can understand and accept it.'

So, evidently, for those who refuse to believe in the probability of a return to earth, there is the assurance of a soul who is learning the wisdom of accepting the new Life, and absorbing its beauty and goodness as well as digesting its lessons.

Argument about the pros and cons of possible re-birth leads nowhere. First we need to absorb the lessons of our present one. Yet surely we can accept that the Creator has planned our slow evolution with divine wisdom, and that we shall never be denied a chance to develop towards the Spiritual beings we shall one day become, in

the return of the Spirit to its Creator.

The history of this earth, we are told, is millions of years, and most of us now existing in bodily armour will have passed through former experiences - and, we trust, learned from them.

We have come forth from the Centre - which is the Creator

God. He has given each of us a soul and free will to follow our own paths, as we go out from that Centre.

When each soul has absorbed all its adventures, and successes and failures, it returns to the Centre, not as the Prodigal Son, but as the welcome son of the Father, the Creator, with an increased stature to carry its harvests.

God created us, and He sent us out into a wilderness of such beauty that it tempts us to forget our origin, such plenitude that we crave more, and grow greedy, and such blindness that we see riot the Spirit in all things, but become ensnared by the perishable and impermanent.

Then, and then only, the prodigal child turns again towards the Centre, and slowly, perhaps painfully, begins the journey back to his Father.

Surely thus the idea of many lives in the impermanent worlds are necessary. Equally, progress will be slow, and will possibly become more difficult as we renounce much which once we held dear.

Must we not realise that those souls living or having lived amongst us, whom we call Saints or Masters who have conquered within themselves, the drift away from the Spirit (the Centre), are already travelling the difficult road back?

The Spirit is always there. The Challenging Light is ever within us. The Centre, which is the Spirit, is immovable, and we are the travellers through numerous lives of experience who are either on our way out from the Centre or, with the joy of the Spirit, making our slow return to it.

Rebirth, or the possible return to earth, is not a subject much discussed by the majority of souls in the 'earlier spaces' of this new Life of the Spirit.

Surely this is to be expected. After the trauma of life experience the soul feels freed. It does not wish to return to earthly restrictions and the trials and sorrows from which it has just escaped.

Let me recount an experience which made a deep impression on my own thinking. A good friend died after a long life and many tribulations, including a terrible experience in a Japanese prison camp during the Second World War, poor health, and a long spell in a nursing home before the end.

I had not been able to visit her, but we kept in touch, and when I was informed of her death I knew it was what she had longed for.

Two days after her death, while I was having my morning bath, I received a psychic

message. The words came sharply like light rays across my consciousness.

'Tell X, tell X,' it began. 'This is from Y' - another friend who had passed over three years before - 'that our friend M is all right. She has arrived, and we have all met her.' This referred to her husband and mutual friends. 'M is with us. She is very tired, and rather bewildered, but happy. Some of her first words were, "I'll never go back to earth again!" She will be having a long-needed rest here.'

Is this reaction surprising? I do not think so, after the patiently endured sufferings which had been her life. It is a normal reaction, and with rest and understanding and the help and comfort of the devoted souls who will nurse her and bring the Light of the Spirit to heal the wounds of her earth experience, she will find peace. Strength will renew her own faith in the Great Spirit of Life, that faith which upheld her through the years of suffering and wartime imprisonment in a foreign land.

This experience must be a very normal one, and has changed and blossomed and produced shining beauty and peace.

Surely the realisation, even the teaching of the possibility and desirability of returning to human existence in order to make good the old mistakes, and to know the joys of true fulfilment, is a step to be meditated upon and debated by those who have enjoyed the peace of the 'heaven-world', and have begun the progress onward to the higher spheres.

Most of us must be like infants when we first arrive, and, like children, we respond and learn. We are told that 'as above, so below'.

On earth we do not put infants into teen-age classes, neither do we fill our universities with children. Life consists of progressive steps to knowledge. Will it not be the same in the next world?

Another point which requires examination is the question as to whether re-birth is necessary or even desirable for all souls?

A life of fulfilment and dedication may need no further experience. Such a soul may progress onward with members of his group through the Halls of Learning, on to Higher Planes of which we in our natural ignorance can know nothing.

Reincarnation is a way of progress. All progress must be earned. Progression can be on many levels, and in many directions.

We can be assured that we will be led to the right steps forward and onward, and each soul will always be in the right place for further advancement at the right time.

The doctrine of Reincarnation has existed for centuries, and was part of the beliefs of both the Egyptian era and the Grecian. Indeed, re-birth has featured in ancient times and in ancient religions. It is not a new doctrine.

It was part of the belief of the early Christian Church, but was removed as an article of faith at the Council of Constantinople.

Yet, I was rather shocked to learn from a high churchman that any belief in Reincarnation damages the belief and wonder of the Resurrection of Christ. I leave that with my readers to contemplate.

Regressing people back into past lives has been, and continues to be, a great experiment. There are points for and against such practices.

Once I had wanted to be so regressed by an expert until I thought seriously about such an experiment. For I firmly believe that I had an incarnation as a Cathar priestess in the eleventh century in France; and the writings of Dr. Guirdham* and our discussions have convinced me of this reality.

* The Cathars and Reincarnation — Neville Spearman.

I was born this time with black brown marks over one shoulder and down my back. Every doctor who has examined me has been fascinated by the marks, which have grown with the growth of my body into a seemingly coherent stream of smoke-blackened skin. The marks have never moved or bled or hurt, and medical men have regarded them as a strange puzzle.

I have had a deep knowledge that I had at some time suffered, as many others have done, death by torture and fire.

The Cathar books by Dr. Guirdham have brought home the reality. In the late eleven hundreds, the Inquisition in one instance at Mont Sigur in the Languedoc tied a hundred or so Cathars together and burned them.

As they were driven to the burning stakes, they were beaten with burning branches across their shoulders. Was this terror so deep in my soul that it persisted as the blackened patches of skin on my left shoulder?

I can never be certain, yet I would never agree to regression; such an experiment might revive a soul memory of unforgettable horror.

On a more gentle and happy theme, I would like to describe the meeting with two women of such beauty in my life, that their countenances were a delight and a joy to me. We became friends, and discovered that both held the same belief in rebirth.

Their faces were facsimiles of Grecian women, their profiles of perfect contour, their skins like white marble, and their movements of great gentleness and delicacy.

There was little doubt that they were Grecian back in incarnation, and in their gentleness inspired respect and admiration.

As both were of British nationality and of British descent, this definite Greek strain might be explained through Reincarnation!

Neither of the parents of one of the women whom I met displayed any sign of such ancestry, neither of them was outstanding. They had pleasant normal English countenances. Has such a quirk of strangeness any explanation?

An interesting story that I heard many years ago is, I believe, relevant. I can vouch

for its truth.

An Egyptologist, a clever man and a writer, employed a daily char. The woman was always complaining bitterly about her only son. He was cold and unfeeling towards her. He took her money and spent it. He could never hold a job, and was therefore mostly out of work and without cash, so he took that which she earned, and spent it unwisely. Her employer and his wife became a little weary of her constant grumbling, but she was a good worker, so that they let it pass, making it a joke between them.

One morning she was busily dusting her employer's study, whilst he was at his desk writing a letter. As he reached for an envelope he suddenly realised that there was a strange silence in the room.

He looked round, and saw that the woman had stopped work and was lying back in an armchair. Thinking she was ill he crossed to her. She appeared to be asleep, but she was muttering under her breath. He leaned over and listened.

She was talking in a strange language. He leaned closer. Then he realised that it was an ancient Egyptian dialect. Grabbing a writing pad he wrote down as well as he could the ancient symbols. They seemed to make sense.

Suddenly she stirred, opened her eyes and sat up. 'Must have been asleep,' she muttered. 'Sorry, Sir. I was a bit upset last night. Didn't get much sleep.' He smiled at her, 'Don't worry', he said, and helped her to her feet.

Then he noticed that, beside the duster she was clasping between the palms of her hands, was a valuable Egyptian statue he had managed to buy some years earlier. It was unique - and had been discovered on a dig.

The woman had been clutching it and his first thought was for its safety. Carefully he took it from her, looked it over for any sign of damage and returned it to its usual place on the mantel shelf.

Then, as she continued her work, he sat down, and began to think. She had been speaking ancient Egyptian; he recognised the sounds of the words.

It was terribly strange. He tried to make out the sense, but found that his knowledge was insufficient.

That evening he visited a friend who taught languages, a man with a great interest in Egyptology. Together they examined the few symbols. His friend confirmed the authenticity of the written messages.

'She was muttering curses on her son', he explained, 'and mourning her lot that she had but this one, and how she hated him! He was coarse and ugly - she didn't want him for her son.'

'And in the original dialect,' said her employer, 'she was in a kind of trance.'

'That is so,' agreed his friend. They stared at one another.

‘But she couldn’t have known it!’ protested her employer.

Could this be a proof of reincarnation? Soul memory, after a lapse of thousands of years! And now she is repaying her hateful behaviour towards him. A strange occurrence, indeed! There is no more to add, except the line which runs through my mind.

‘The mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small.’

CHAPTER X

Death is not the End

The book is finished, I told myself. It was an extraordinary L feeling, as if I had lost something precious. Yet there was relief that the work was done. For some days I moped, doubts and fears in my mind. I decided to put the whole untidy manuscript away and forget about it for a long time.

But that was not possible. Slowly, the dreariness that beset me as the aftermath of the task of writing dwindled and died, and I began to think about getting the manuscript typed. This caused a problem.

My eyesight has improved sufficiently to allow me to see the world around me, to walk alone in the roads, and even to go shopping, although I had to ask for help in deciphering the prices on goods. But I had no near sight.

My new doctor, a very clever young man who was now treating my disabilities with homeopathic medicines, warned me it was possible that my true close sight might never return even though the blood-clot behind the eye pupil was being dispersed. This was a blow, though I still held on to hope. But I could never read anything that I had written; neither could I read a book or newspaper. Only with a powerful magnifying glass could I discern a few words. Yet my sight had improved wonderfully, and I refused to give up hope.

The book was written, my task was finished and someone would be found to help by reading the chapters slowly to me, in order that I could correct them. And then, I hoped, type the manuscript for the publisher who was keen to see it.

And so it came about! The good friend, who had a strong positive mind and who had given me such encouragement during the writing, was sure that this second part of the task would be accomplished.

One morning, when I was very depressed, she visited me. ‘It will have to be somebody who understands and believes in my subject,’ I wailed. ‘And I only know two friends who could help me. They both live too far away and have husbands and families to look after.’

‘Have you asked them?’ persisted my friend.

I shook my head. ‘Then,’ she said, ‘pick up the phone this afternoon and call the one

who might manage it.'

So that very Saturday afternoon I did just that. My friend's first words were, 'Oh, Helen, I've been thinking of you all morning. When are you coming to stay with us again?'

The result was that the whole subject was discussed. On my friend's suggestion, I should go to stay with her and her husband. She would read the chapters slowly to me for correction, when that was over they would bring me back to my home, and settle down to type the manuscript after she returned. It was wonderful. I was indeed being taken care of!

My friend had a good sense of humour; she also had known Frances Banks and admired her. 'It looks as if I've been routed out to help you,' she said, and I had a feeling that perhaps she was right. Frances was still very active.

Now that my mind was relieved about the typing, I felt I could relax. I sat down and wrote my own finale quite happily. Now all was done! But was it? The thought began to grow in me that another chapter had to be written. For there was a gap somewhere, an omission of some perspective of the subject which had not been covered. More and more I had the feeling that Frances was warning me that there was another chapter still to come.

But it was not until I had attacked the task of arranging the chapters in their right order that the skeleton of the additional material insinuated itself into my mind.

There had to be explanations of why I was so certain that life persisted in the Spirit after the death of the body.

Yet, funnily enough, the chapter only took form after a discussion with a disbeliever. She was a most intelligent and clever person who had asked if she could read my books.

I sounded her. 'Do you believe in another world after death?'

'No,' she retorted firmly. 'I do not! I do not believe in anything, and there is no God.'

We could have argued. I longed to say, 'I can prove it!'

But it would have been of no avail. She was as convinced in her beliefs as I was in mine. The argument would have become too intense.

'Do not argue about religion or politics,' I thought, as I left her. But now I knew the title and the substance of the extra chapter which I had to write.

There is no death

Death has no sting.

A few mornings later, I awoke with the words of the chapter ringing through my mind. And here are some of the personal proofs I can give of my own faith and my earthly experiences.

There have been, throughout my life, so many personal experiences to justify my faith that I feel I should share at least some of them with my many readers. So I intend to recall them exactly as they happened, or as they were told to me by others who had experienced similar occurrences.

(a) It was the year of 1950. My husband had been on six weeks home leave, when just before the Christmas season, he was ordered to rejoin his ship on 10 December. We had been living in a small flat in the house of a Canadian friend in London. How disappointed we were not to be spending Christmas together.

But a sailor's wife is used to such things. I set about the usual Christmas shopping. On 18 December I went to Barker's, in Kensington High Street, for a last-moment purchase of cards. There was no traffic light there then, but a policeman held up the traffic. As we were standing in a queue waiting to cross, I 'heard' these words. 'If you were hit on the head and were killed, you wouldn't know you were dead, would you?'

I turned to look at the man standing beside me. Had he spoken these strange words? He stared back at me. I turned round. Then I heard again the same words.

At that moment the traffic policeman gave a signal and we surged into Barker's. But I still felt worried.

At three o'clock the next morning, my son telephoned me from Canada. He told me that his father had had an accident on his ship and a heavy object had crashed upon his head. 'Can you fly out tomorrow, Mother?' he asked.

'Yes,' I replied. 'Is . . . he . . .?' There was a silence. 'Yes, Mother. He . . . he died last night.'

So the words had meaning - at least for me. My lovely husband was trying to tell me - and he did not know that he was already dead. Death truly has no sting.

My second personal experience proves for me another point: death does not obliterate the love for those left on earth.

Next day I flew out to Canada. I was rushed through all preliminaries, even vaccination, put on a plane to Montreal, and thence by another to New Brunswick, to an hotel room already booked for me.

My son met me. It was now 20 December. He told me that the funeral had been fixed for Christmas Eve.

The service was a sad, quiet one conducted by the local clergyman at the Chapel in the funeral parlour. I remember the day, cold, dark, with snow falling. Many people were at the service.

When it was over, the wife of one of the Company's officials suggested that I should return home with her.

'Women don't go to the burial very much here,' she suggested. 'And you look worn out. Come back and sit by the fire, and I will make you a nice pot of tea.'

I felt I couldn't take much more. My son also agreed with her suggestion, so we left the little procession.

At her home I relaxed by the fire in a warm house and drank the hot strong tea. Then she left me to rest. But I could not sleep. I was dazed and weary, and suddenly terribly frightened. What was going to happen to me? I knew that I was left with very little money. Our insurance had gone to pay for a house we had built when the war came. Now it was sold and the money had been divided between us. But there was so little left.

I sat by these blazing logs, sad and feeling lost. There would be no compensation for my husband's death, and I had no money to sue for any.

I thought of my husband and our plans for the future. We had thought of buying a small cottage in the English countryside when he retired. Now there was nothing. Now his silent body was being carried along towards the open grave in the sailors' cemetery high on the hill overlooking the sea. 'Home is the sailor, home from the sea.' Robert Louis Stevenson's words came to me. I wanted to cry, but the tears would not come.

Slowly I became aware of words being said in my brain. Over and over again they were repeated so that at last I started to listen. 'You'll be all right' - and then the pet name my husband always called me. 'You'll be taken care of, they're getting a good pension for you. Please don't worry' - and then again the pet name.

The words came, I knew, from my darling husband's spirit. There could be no possible doubt.

I could scarcely credit it. Yet his promise came true. I received a pension sufficient for my needs, as I still do today. My husband was caring for my welfare, even as the solemn event of death had barely registered with him.

Love does not end. The Spirit remembers and cares.

This is my experience and my message, as it is Frances Banks'. And it is true. Thanks be to God.

The Perfume of Lilac

This, I believe, is a most beautiful and moving story, for not only is it true, but it shows the love between two people, and a love which continued into death.

It was told to me by a friend who had dedicated her whole life to care for the sick. Trained as a nurse, she went on in her chosen profession to become Ward Sister and, later, Assistant Matron in a hospital of five hundred beds.

I have often thought that nurses, who are so often present at death-beds, must frequently be involved in passings from this world which are spiritually and mystically beyond our everyday conceptions.

During one period of her life, my friend was engaged in private nursing. One day her doctor asked her to take care of an old gentleman who was seriously ill with pneumonia. 'He won't last long,' he told her. 'He'll probably go tonight. But I would like you to be beside him.'

My friend arrived at the large stone house surrounded by a beautiful garden. The old man lay quite still in one of the single beds in a large double bedroom. Outside one of the windows was a purple lilac tree in bloom, whose scent filled the sick-room.

The patient's wife, a frail, little old lady, was sleeping in the adjoining dressing-room. The new nurse saw that there was a couch in the bedroom on which she could rest, and books for her to read in the long night watch.

She made the old man comfortable, washing and tending him; she saw that he was partly unconscious, and remembered the doctor's instructions. 'If he does go in the night, don't call me. I'll be over in the morning. I've left you a sedative for his wife should she need it.'

My friend went along to see the old lady, and found her comfortably in bed and asleep. Then she returned to the couch for her night's vigil.

She started to read a book, and from time to time went over to the bed to see her patient.

My friend now takes up the story. The night was hot and the windows were open; the perfume of the lilacs was sweet and heavy in the room.

'I shall never forget that scent,' she told me later. 'I sat on the couch by my shaded lamp, and tried to read, going over from time to time to see how he was. Everything was very still. Time passed slowly. It was in the early hours of the morning when, looking up from my book, I saw that the old lady had come into the room, and was standing by her husband's bed. She was looking down at him. Not wishing to disturb her pretended to go on reading, and when I looked up a few minutes later, I saw that she had gone. I went over to the old man. He had not moved, and I went back to my chair. A short time later, I again went to the bed, and saw that he had already gone, slipping quietly away into his next life. So his wife must have come to say goodbye, I thought. Poor little soul. I decided I'd better go in and break the news to her.'

'I found her lying very still. She had not moved, and I turned away, letting her sleep on.'

'Before I reached the communicating door, however, I felt I had to go back. As I stood looking down at her, I realised that she too was dead. There was nothing I could do, only wait for the doctor's arrival. But I knew. Her spirit had come for her beloved husband a few minutes before he too had left his human body. The life-long partners who had never been separated were now together in the spirit.'

I must explain that the old lady had never moved, the bed clothes had not been disturbed. Life had just quietly slipped away from her.

As she must have done so many times before, she went to his bedside to see how he was, when he was at the point of death. The old man, no doubt, was aware of her presence. Perhaps - and I believe we may dare to say so - it helped him to let go of his tired old body.

It must have been a truly wonderful moment for them both. United now in spirit, but not yet in the full consciousness of spirit, they went together, with the perfume of the lilac about them, to the consciousness of the spirit life.

My friend is sure that she did not see the old lady go out of the room and return to her bed. Both were dead and neither body had been disturbed, nor were the bed clothes crumpled. No wonder that the perfume of lilac always brings back the memory. For one second she must have actually seen the spirit form of the wife waiting beside the bed for that of her dear one to join her.

Death is not the end. And love transcends death. Love never dies, for it is part of the Spirit.

CHAPTER XI

Questions Answered

Frances Banks

You ask if we are happy?

That is hardly a word that applies to our state of living. Happiness which appears to be so important to many unenlightened people has no real meaning with us.

We are at peace.

How many souls who think themselves happy have truly found peace, or would understand if you asked them whether they were at peace? Happiness is transitory. Soul peace, which the surviving entity slowly acquires, is of such value and permanence that it takes prominence over all else.

To us, peace is happiness, although I doubt whether many here would think that way. Peace in all things, all ways, all minds, all future hopes is an attribute that has to be earned. The earning and receiving of it is life itself to us. For it is won, not by sacrifice, except of our passions and our angers, but by One-ness with the Spirit of Peace.

From the observation made by the inhabitants of your world who arrive here, there are few souls who have been able to face the change with equanimity, and certainly not with peace.

There is no doubt that, because death is wrongly associated with fear and even terror, the passing of the soul from one consciousness to another is fraught with unnecessary anxiety. That is why our new arrivals, after being greeted and welcomed by those they have loved, find relief by resting their troubled minds.

Later, by communicating with other souls they realise that they have suffered unnecessary traumas. Often souls only remember the suffering before they passed from one world to another, but in the sweet peace of their rest in the Spirit the memory gradually fades.

Peace has to be learned and practised. It is a mind and soul activity. So when the body is severed a great change naturally takes place.

The Thought Mind commences to work, the body mind to fade into nothingness. It is up to the newly rested soul to discover whether he wishes to remain alone, or to rejoin his loved ones, or to find a teacher to instruct him about the progress he can now make, or even whether there is a place where he can serve others.

But all the while he will be absorbing peace, learning to control his reactions or resentments to his separation from material life, or calm his regrets at failures he now perceives. There is no compulsion. He is a free spirit. His thinking is now void of terror and worry; gradually he absorbs the peace which the other souls have absorbed.

Being at peace becomes a normality. The joy of freedom from any restrictions, the glorious music of the spheres, the beauty of natural growth are all his. All these are beyond the normal idea of happiness. The soul itself is learning to respond to peace and the peace within.

Questions have been raised on earlier statements made in *The Testimony of Light* concerning Groups here and in the Higher Worlds.

Why should this cause doubt in the minds of men? 'As above, so below' has always been a pointer to explain behaviour patterns. It is the law of nature, and nature is but a part of the working out of the spirit.

Animals, birds gather into groups and flights; fish into shoals, bees into swarms, so is it not natural that humans gather into families, partners, races and nations? Like attracts like.

In the next world should it be regarded as strange that the same partnerships, for learning and service are a feature of the soul's experience? Indeed, it is as natural as in the world of matter, except that on this plane these Groups have a deeper purpose. For now the soul is discovering its true identity, working its way upwards through the Halls of Learning, the Schools of Philosophy, the great Centres of music, art, literature and to the understanding of cosmic consciousness known to the Masters.

We were created in God's image; we have come out from the great Centre of Light, the Creative Spirit, to gain strength by experience, before we return to that Point of Light to become One with It again; a Pilgrim's Progress of infinite Life, yet not a lonely pathway of single struggling souls but a growth of grouped spirits, linking their way to eventual Eternity.

‘Have you found the Spirit in your new awakening after you left the earth plane?’ I asked.

There was a silence. ‘I believe,’ Frances replied, ‘that I am more aware of what the Spirit does, and still almost unable to decide what It is.’

‘But you live in the Spirit,’ I protested.

‘True, I have no solid earthly body and I live in the mind, which gradually develops into the eternal Mind. As Jesus told us, “In my Father’s House are many mansions”. And so it is. But to discover the entrances and even to be allowed to enter becomes a matter of the Mind within you taking ascendancy of the mind with which you came into this life after the body’s death.’

I was trying to phrase a further question, but Frances’ mind was already in contact again.

‘I will never regret my decision to work in the world, nor did I ever renounce either my vows that I had learned in the Order. But now, in trying to describe my own arrival and experiences, I know that the religious life was a wonderful school for understanding the life of the Thought World.

‘We do not immediately become angels or even heavenly Beings of Light, which was a popular belief for many centuries, even among the Churches. Much preparation is essential for the souls of the newly arrived. Adjustments must be made and understood.

‘To some it comes as a great relief and marvellous release of the Spirit. To others who have existed almost entirely on a material and sensual level, many adjustments are involved before they can, so the speak, move on.

‘I did so myself, although perhaps not so slowly, since my life had been spent in obeying the Convent rules of meditation and prayer.’

The book was finished, I thought, though not yet typed, when I received a letter posing a question which seemed important enough to be answered. I believe that this question worries more readers than I had realised.

From a reader, whom I had never met, she wrote of her life of sorrow and the loss of a son from leukemia.

She wrote about those souls who had progressed to higher regions of wisdom and enlightenment. Yet she was doubtful whether they could descend from their exalted wisdom to meet loved ones from the earth plane when they arrived in the next World.

I thought about this for some days, and asked for help in finding the answer.

This morning the help came almost before I was properly awake, and I hastened to my desk to write.

I know only that it comes from the Spirit of Wisdom; I do not need to enquire about

the Source or the Channel.

The soul cannot die! Life in the body ends, but the soul with its memories is instantly awake in the new environment in which it finds itself.

Yet it may be that this soul is a stranger in a strange land if, as so often happens, it has been swamped by the demands, desires, and attachments to its bodily needs. In effect, the human element during the earthly life has so blinded and smothered the soul instincts that, when it finally reaches home after death, the soul is as weak and puny as a newborn child, often needing much help from those waiting to greet it.

It must be here said that much that has been taught and accepted concerning life after death has been based on medieval conceptions, which require updating to the different and more sophisticated world of today.

The next World does not change; it is our widening conception of it which is leading us to examine the evidence for change. The next World is not a place or region. It is a different consciousness.

So to the question and answer.

As we have already said, as above, so below. Here, in our concrete world, we can go up and we can then come down. But we cannot come down until we have gone up.

In the same way, those souls who have progressed in this earthly experience, or who have progressed onwards in their after-death experience can always descend to lower spheres in peace and safety to help other climbing spirits, or to welcome and help friends and loved ones from the world of matter.

They can then return to their advanced spheres when and if they wish. Or, as many do, remain to pass on their own knowledge.

The soul, as we must understand, has evolved from the Creative Spirit which we call God, and by God's own Law in some unpredestined time, it will return to that Spirit, in an experiment of Life itself, thus obeying the Law: Go forth and return. Without such venturing into the Law there can be no advancement. As already shown, we copy on the earth plane that which our souls remember from the Spirit.

So perfect is the Law, that the way to such Spheres is open to all, even though it may take untold earth years to accomplish.

There may also be other worlds where we can obtain experience. We have no definite knowledge of such at present. Yet that, too, may be a further stage in our progress.

God's Law which we can term the Challenging Light is perfect: we are always in the right place at the right time in order to experience that which we have built into our lives - even though it might be death.

Wars and hate result from the fact that we are all at different stages of growth. It is a Tower of Babel, where we all speak different Soul languages.

The world is composed of young souls eager for adventure, developing souls, mature

souls, advanced souls, wise old souls; at times even an Illumined soul will visit the earth plane for special work.

Among those we must place Jesus Christ, Buddha, and other Eastern Masters as well as many of our western saints, who came to earth with a message for their Age.

Let us therefore listen to, and hear their message, in order that our own spiritual advancement can be hastened.

Part II

Let go, and let God

The Law of God (the Spirit) is perfection. Man, in his ignorance exerts his own free will, too often ignoring the Spirit within him.

Only when man lives within the Spirit of his Creator, will there be perfection and true peace on earth.

Meanwhile we suffer and die, to return and suffer again. How many thousands of earth years will pass before we believe and live the Teachings of Jesus?

Each step forward is a step onward into that Light.

CHAPTER XII

The Challenge of the Light

Frances Banks

‘The term the Challenging Light might be thought a misnomer. Light at all times is a blessing. It uplifts, and illuminates the way.

But it is challenging as well, because a light which is too vivid or too strong can blind, and even lead to disaster.

What then do I now recognise as a challenge in the Light of the Spirit? Human beings live in a divided world of temporary materialism and inborn Spirituality. Until I came to this world, I had not truly recognised the difficulties, drawbacks and failures caused by this duality in man. Let me explain from my own earth experience.

During the twenty-eight years I spent in the Order, every minute of my day was predetermined. Besides keeping the Holy Rule, the prayer times, the silences, the hours of prescribed meditation, my days were passed teaching. I had dedicated my life to God’s service.

Having accepted and chosen this life, my soul was at peace, though I was often tired with my duties and responsibilities. But now I see how I was shielded in this life of the Spirit. I was oblivious of the material world. I did not handle money.

My salary was paid directly to the Order. Any Royalties received from my published books also became part of the income of the Order.

But I was satisfied, and at peace. It was not until my inner Self prompted me to go out into the world to learn more of the Mysteries of Spirit and Matter that the realisation of the challenge was forcibly brought home to me.

The power of money began to affect my life. The world, I discovered, was a hostile place, the Light of the Spirit grew dim in the daily struggle for existence. The Challenge was before me, and maybe my divided life caused my soul to tremble, and I faltered. Now I am able to judge it all with dispassion. Then I was unprepared for the difficulties and trials of ordinary human existence.

Once I even decided to go back to the Convent. I was desperate and alone, I resolved to ring up the Mother Superior, and ask to be allowed to return.

It was a pouring wet day, and I was some distance away from the Convent, and had hardly enough money to get back to it.

I seemed to walk down innumerable streets, looking for a telephone kiosk. I was drenched to the skin, and intensely unhappy. At last I found what I was looking for. Eagerly I entered, and picked up the receiver. The line was out of order. I could not turn back. I made my way back to my drab lodging.

That night I knew what I had to do. The door of my former retreat had closed to me. There was another path to follow, and different work to be done.

I decided to go back to my own country, where with the help of kind friends, I was provided with money and clothes. The second part of my life had begun.

It proved to be the right move, I obtained the newly created position of Tutor-Organiser at Maidstone Prison, and I enjoyed the work and the new life. It was here that I became friends with Helen Greaves. I called her my Celestial Telephone, and she proved herself worthy of this name.

Later - to my great joy my dear Mother Superior often spoke to me through Helen's 'telephone'. Then I learned of the newly formed Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies, and Helen and I both joined.

The Way had opened before me. I was not lost or mistaken. The Spirit had led me. The seclusion of the Convent gave way to the challenge of the Spirit of Light on the open platform.

Later, I occupied a small flat above Helen's in the country at Addington, and we formed the first of many private groups for meditation. It continued for over eighteen years.

My illness came as a shock and my passing into the next life . . . as a sadness since I had to leave so much work unfinished.

I have tried to show in this book how the Spirit has challenged both of us, the

inspirer and the writer.

It is for the reader to decide whether the Challenge was met. Time alone will show whether the Light will shine through to aid those who doubt or who fear the strength of that Light.

In my present consciousness, I can look back and understand that my time on earth was intended for this work, and my quiet Convent life prepared me for it. I had died in order to learn a greater knowledge and understanding which I could send forth in a book to be received by the material world.

One of the lessons, I hope to be shown through the story of my life, is that the *Spirit leads*. The right path is always there for us to take, even if it is a difficult one. Always the Light leads! That Light can shine through other people, its way can wind through insuperable difficulties and obstacles, and even through the death of the physical body.

It never completely fades. It is only our sight that grows feeble, and causes us to give up.

Here the Light burns brightly and the wonder and majesty of the Spirit is more easily understood by those great Souls who are progressing upward to the Heart of God. The Centre of the Light is inspiration and strength and purpose for those like myself, who are learning to trust the Spirit.

May this book inspire the travellers on earth to realise, as Jesus taught, that the Kingdom of Heaven is within them; and that the way to follow is to believe and know the Spirit, to trust its Light and to accept its Challenge.

Yet Light can be used to challenge. It can reveal what darkness hides. A man or a soul (if you wish) can for his own particular reasons conceal himself from others, lose himself, for instance, in the darkness of a forest, or in the wilderness of urban slums.

In the same way that one uses a lighted lantern to search for a lost person so does the Light of the Spirit brighten the way for the Prodigal Sons of your world and all worlds. When the Light seeks them out, they are revealed as they really are. Then the bad, and the good, are exposed, the unfulfilled promises, the undeveloped gifts, and the wasted years.

The Light reveals, challenges, and, thank God, often awakens. So that the Challenging Light may become the Awakening Light.

Yet there are millions of men and women who go through their entire lives without ever questioning the reason for living.

Dull, unawakened, they seem to sleep through all the promise of their lives. Never do they ask themselves, Who am I? What am I? Why am I here? Religion is confined to the Church.

The Light of the Spirit calls them to awaken. But how to awaken, you ask? Go within, discover your inner self. Meditate on yourself and your relation to the God-Spirit within your own soul, and think of the recorded words of Jesus. 'The Kingdom of God is within you.' 'I (the Spirit) if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me.'

'Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you.' 'Lo, I am with you even until the end of the world.'

Such meditations can be practised while weeding the garden - or during a country walk and in meditation groups.

We all have different ways of realising our One-ness with God. The Holy Spirit is the mediator and the challenger. Working and living in the Light of the Spirit, is the manifestation of God in us.

The Light of the Spirit *is* a Challenging Light.

We are as much spirits now as we will ever be. We are brothers and sisters in all lands, all worlds, all states of consciousness, whether awakened to Light or dulled by treachery, greed, fear, laziness, false teaching or stupidity.

Men and women have made the Creative Spirit into a Man- God, and failed to realise that we are part of that Creative Spirit.

We here are Spirits just as you are spirits in your earthly bodies. Our consciousness has been freed from the duality of earthly thinking, yet we are the same in Spirit. We still love those we loved on earth, we long to help them when they succumb to evil, fear, greed, or hatred, all of which darken the Light of the Spirit in them, and lead them to disaster.

We could (and sometimes *do*) help to guide these victims to new understanding and peace. We long to do more.

But - there is a gulf created - not by the Spirit, or by us, but by man.

Man fears and distrusts communication with those friends, teachers and inspirers he considers to be dead. But we are not dead. We live.

Yet from the earliest recorded times wise men, prophets and saints have possessed the gift of being able to communicate with the spirits. But these powers have often been abused and charlatans have made a profit from pretending to forecast futures. Because of such malpractice man became sceptical causing clairvoyance, and clairaudience to be swept aside from his spiritual life. We in this consciousness are saddened for humanity. But there are still men and women who possess the seeing eye or the hearing ear, as well as those who have the healing gift, and we have noticed that the gift of true healing, drawn from the Spirit, is slowly being accepted by the Churches and by many people.

It is only when money predominates that these gifts become contaminated and spoiled. The Bible explains that these are Spiritual gifts not created for material

progress.

No one can expect to be rewarded by paying money for such services. These gifts are of the Spirit and will be rewarded by the Spirit.

That has been man's mistake. The gifts of the Spirit are free and should be freely given.

Such gifts, if accepted and revered by Churches, can comfort the bereaved, and guide those in trouble through earthly difficulties. The clergy of the parishes preach and perform the work of charity, but from my own experience and from that of others, it seems they are not endowed with that inner eye and listening ear which can bring true spiritual comfort to the bereaved. Money is a form of exchange instituted for the payment of material things, and should never be included in the free gift of the Spirit. But donating money to charitable institutions does not contaminate the Spirit, nor does it tempt those with the Gifts to sell them on the market place.

For the Churches, and the people, to accept these gifted persons would not only keep them apart from financial gain, but would also help us to help you!

As we see your world drifting into chaos because of your dependence on earthly wealth and power, we long to guide and help you. But between us there is this gulf. Your world must build the bridge over this wide sea of ignorance and fear and greed which for so long has proved an impassable barrier.

But what about the private and inner communications that take place in the sanctuary of one's own heart? Thoughts of love and blessing sent forth to departed loved ones, like tiny springs on a desert. They reassure the travellers in this world that those loved ones continue to remember them. We here remember those who are still on life's journey. Do not forget us.

Man fears that which he does not know. His instinct has been to ridicule what he does not understand. This has been illustrated through the lives of inventors who have dared to break through the common ignorance of earth consciousness.

The possibility that man could create a machine which would overcome the pull of gravity, and lift him into the sky to fly in winged planes, was ridiculed.

Earth consciousness held that such events were impossible, improbable, even ridiculous. But Cosmic consciousness recognised not only the probability but also the possibility.

Thus we fly. We walk on the moon. We reach other planets. We overcome the problem of space.

Within the mind of man is the knowing - but in time, and through labour he can put this knowledge into action.

Through the ages, man has talked and marvelled at the mind that was in Christ Jesus. But Jesus had insisted that this Mind was in every one of his hearers, if they

would only free themselves of earthly belief, and acknowledge the new consciousness in themselves - an awareness, and belief in the Mind within us, that inner Spirit, that Imprisoned Splendour which is crowded out by fear and ignorance.

Very slowly, man is discovering that he need not be limited by earthly knowledge.

The way to the stars is being opened up by the great miracles of modern technology, the wonders of modern surgery, and the new ventures of the mind. The thinking man is realising that true consciousness is the recognition and acceptance of God's Spirit within every soul. Jesus knew and taught this; he demonstrated its wonders and was feared and killed for it. But the seed was sown.

There is a deeper consciousness within all of us, and when faith in the Spirit is maintained, there is no limitations in its development.

And yet, with all the marvellous possibilities opening before mankind, humanity is destroying itself. Today hatred, fear and envy are our gods and our earth is in danger of being destroyed by them.

Is mankind going to prove itself unworthy of the Spirit of its Creator?

The Great Ones, who have lived on earth, have in their knowledge and understanding always preached peace, unity, love, compassion. Without this spiritual consciousness, the wonders and revelations of the Spirit within man cannot flourish. Man was created through the Spirit of Eternity. But throughout history the evolution of man has been halted through holocausts of destruction.

All our prayers are of no consequence until we learn the meaning of life itself. In order to realise an Inner Splendour, the way of the soul must govern the desires of the body. For the body is perishable, but the soul is immortal. When it can envisage a new Age Man's development will have reached a pinnacle.

The Spirit of Progress enriches the souls of men. Let it not be employed to destroy humanity.

Such a Light is dimmed and darkened by the illusory power of earthly existence. Progress emerges from pain, struggle and the use of the Will. But what is this will that can grow so weak that it loses all its power? It can be used for good, for positive work and progress for the benefit of the user, as well as for his neighbours, his country, and even the World. But this same power of will can be so disorientated that it works only for self-satisfaction and egoism. This is man's freedom of action, given to him by his Creator - a gift which needs care and control.

Talents to Use

Talents to use, talents to use:

Now with Thy Spirit all men infuse;

Turning their hearts from how they abuse

*Talents inherent, when they refuse
To pause and to meditate: - How they should use
Talents allotted them — talents to use.*

Giles Lang

After aeons of progress the world of humanity is still struggling with the effects of its free-will.

But this free-will must not entirely be divorced from its Creator. To diverge from the Light is the cause of the destruction of progress in the modern world.

It appears from history that this is not the first time that man has relied entirely on his own power, ambition and greed.

But the present distrust between nations has opened a negative force of fear.

At this present time the inhabitants of this - and maybe other worlds - are living in a black fog of fear. Some of the finest brains are being applied only to the invention of new and more terrifying weapons of war, a terrifying amount of time and money and the best materials are employed in their manufacture. Where has this free-will led us? And to what disaster will it lead us?

This so-called civilisation has become estranged from the Spirit of its creation. It no longer believes that positive progressive living can be established in people and in nations.

Fear can be overcome by faith, and belief can change the individual lives of communities and countries.

The Divine Creator has a purpose, and uses us as His instruments.

Here seems an appropriate place to relate a story.

This is a true story, deeply spiritual, and of great significance.

Until now I never understood why I was told this story.

Now I know, for this morning, during my meditations, I have been told by Higher Minds than my own to write it down.

One week-end, during the late sixties, just after *Testimony of Light* had been published, I was present at a Conference on the Spiritual life, and I had given a talk on the subject.

On the Sunday evening, a man whom I knew only slightly, and who had been in the audience, came up and spoke to me. He was an elderly retired doctor.

To my surprise, he said, 'I would like to talk to you, Helen,' so we walked together to a corner of the big hall, and sat down.

He began almost immediately, 'I feel I have to tell you something.'

The story, as told so simply by the doctor, occurred in the latter months of 1963. That year had been a year of drought in Britain and the land was drying up. I remember that as I drove my little car through the country on my lecture dates, I became appalled at the desolation of our beautiful countryside. In the river beds there was either hard black mud or a trickle of water where a strong stream had once flowed. Fields were dried up, crops looked feeble and whole stretches of fertile soil had baked in the long dry weather.

This was a really bad drought, it was obvious that a poor harvest would follow, and a shortage of crops in the coming year. The country was concerned and worried. I remembered it all very well.

As I watched the doctor's quiet, calm face, I was caught up in the simple power of his story.

He then told me about six men and women of faith, of culture and education, who met together to discuss the tragedy that threatened the whole country. He did not mention their names though I thought I recognised a description of one of them.

At this meeting, there arose a discussion about what could be done to avert possible disaster in Britain. The decision was taken. They would put their faith in the Spirit of God. They decided on a plan of action. The six of them would go to a quiet place in Switzerland. There they would live utterly secluded, in a rented chalet for six days.

Each day would be spent in deep meditation, each one experiencing the One-ness of the Spirit of God in man. They would not ask for help, or pray for the relief of the threatening famine.

They would know and their faith and knowledge (as Jesus said) would move mountains. For those six silent days they hardly spoke to one another even at their simple meals. They were trying a great experiment.

They would live in the Spirit, knowing themselves to be within God's Laws as His children, and they knew that the Spirit would answer.

At the end of the six days they returned to their homes, refreshed and certain that all would be well.

On Christmas Eve of that year, it began to snow. I could recall it for I remember the first flakes as I drove home with a friend from a small pre-Christmas sherry party.

And the snow, ice, and bleak temperatures continued until early April. I remember because I locked my car in the garage on the day after Christmas, and the grass around the garage doors, becoming hard with snow and ice, locked it in until April.

Suddenly, as many will remember, the snow stopped, the thaw came and the land ran with water. That summer of 1963 brought a fruitful harvest. Grass was green again, cattle grazed in fields starred with Spring flowers. The winter had passed and the danger of a dried earth had disappeared.

The doctor ended his recital with these words: 'The Spirit works, we know.'

Many might scoff at that story. But it is an episode sacred to those few unknown believers. Surely it shows that there is truth in the teaching that the Light can illumine the darkness and doubt of men's minds.

If faith, as small as a grain of mustard seed, can move mountains, surely an all-embracing total faith in that Challenging Light can remove the mountains of fear, the outrages of evil, the suspicion and the greed, and the arsenals of deadly weapons in which we put our trust today. Could we not try it?

Not in ceremonies and rites, not in beseeching prayers, but in silence and knowledge and faith without guile deep within our own souls. We must put our faith in that Light which is now challenged at this critical period in our history.

'I felt I had to tell you,' ended the doctor, don't know why.' But now I think I do know why.

Frances Banks

Since I have not mentioned the effect of sudden death either from heart failure or as a result of an accident I should like to include the reassuring experiences of those who have suffered such unexpected deaths.

After discussing this with them, I have found my thoughts returning to my own experience. As I have already explained, the casting off of the transitory body was nothing compared to the searing pain it had endured for those long pre-death weeks. For me, they were harder to wipe from my consciousness than the total abandonment of the body itself.

Those here whose last moments of conscious earth life were threatened by some approaching inevitable holocaust, assure me that they have no memory of either leaving the body or of what took place immediately afterwards. Their memories seemed to be shrouded in the blessed state of unconsciousness.

Sudden death is not prolonged in anguish as humans believe. Without realising it the soul has been prepared, and all is known. As we were instructed, not a sparrow falls to the Aground without the Spirit knowing of it. As happened in my own case the human mind of the victim seems to become anaesthetised. The Spirit takes charge. When the soul awakens into this consciousness it is at peace, even though at first it probably will not realise that it has left its human home.

Here I feel that questions are arising in the reader's mind. Where is heaven? Where have our dear ones gone?

The answer is that heaven is everywhere. There is no departure as such. Our departed friends are still around those they loved on earth.

They have not gone away. For death is not a departure. It is merely a *change of*

consciousness.

Our consciousness in this further experience is quite different from human consciousness.

We have knowledge of a wider 'living', an introduction to greater understanding . . . and 'between the spiritual and the material life, a great gulf is fixed.'

Yet, we are around you, conscious of our friends, aware of the state of the world, and longing to help and comfort you and to bring to earth the Challenge of the Light.

CHAPTER XIII

I Carry the Light Within Me

Helen Greaves

It is January, and the days have been cold and dark. For nearly a week I have not written a word. Perhaps, I told myself, my book is nearly finished and there is nothing more to be said. I had already anticipated its completion, although I had not yet attempted the long foreword in which to introduce Frances Banks to readers who had not yet read *Testimony of Light*.

This morning, as I opened my eyes and looked through my uncurtained window, I saw that it was a dark morning.

'I won't be able to write today,' I told myself sadly. 'The light is too poor.'

At that moment my welcome morning cup of tea was brought in. 'The days are getting lighter,' said my kind hostess-friend, who runs this lovely home where I now live.

'Yes,' I assented, but as I sipped the hot, strong tea, I wondered. 'No sun,' I thought, 'and I won't be able to see at my desk in the window, and I can't work under the electric lamp anyway.'

A truly negative reaction. I was slightly ashamed and began to take myself to task. 'You're doubting,' I told myself. 'You *know* this book is the work of the Spirit and *will* be finished.'

So, I considered, my grain of mustard-seed faith is getting dented. Almost immediately the words came to my mind, true and potent. 'Before ye call, I have answered.'

I finished my tea quickly and went to my desk to find paper and pen. There may be something to write down, some point that I would want to remember. Almost before I had arranged myself back in bed, words poured into my mind. I heard myself repeating them.

'I carry the Light within me to help me complete this book.' Wonderful words! 'I must meditate on them,' I told myself.

After I had breakfasted and dressed, I sat in my accustomed place to close my mind against all material things.

'I carry the Light within me.' Then my mind became stilled, and I asked for help. It came.

How long I sat in that utter peace I do not know. But when at last I found myself on this earthly plane of thought again, I was whispering sentences as though I was repeating words from another, enlightening source.

'I carry the Light within me!' What Light? The Light which Jesus brought to the world. The Light of the Spirit. The Light of the Christ. For did He not say, 'I am with you always', and 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you', and 'Greater things than these shall ye do'?

Perchance my examples were not literally the exact words from the Bible. But they were true! Had I not proved them so many times in my life?

The Spirit of Christ - or the Christ Spirit - is part of every man and woman on earth. The Spirit which assures the doubting mind that All things are possible to those who believe.

The Spirit of Christ was, is and ever will be. We, the whole of humanity are the work of the Divine Creator - we call that Creator God - yet God is a Spirit, *the* Spirit, and not a man, as we would make this divine Creator of Life.

This divine Spirit of Creation can be seen in all the Creator's Work. It is the Light within each one of us, the Spiritual Light which is as far above us as the heavens are above the earth. We can penetrate It as humans have already penetrated the high atmosphere, and walked on the Moon.

The Light is within us, even when we have rejected the possibility of this Light working in us, and for us. Jesus, the Christ, showed us what the Light could do - the Light of the Spirit. We have been given brains to reason and to understand for ourselves. But the Power to do and to perform comes from the Power of the Spirit of Life within us. The Light of the Spirit which Christ taught.

And why am I writing this? Because throughout my life and work I have proved the belief in this Power. Because I needed to remind myself of it, to become humbled, and prove its reality again. Yes, but even more than that.

This book is written in the utter belief of the Light of the Spirit. It might, in my small way, bring home to readers the reality of the Christ Message, which the Master we follow tried to impress upon an unreceptive world, and for which He was crucified.

The very fact of the Crucifixion Cross is interesting. The perpendicular shows the growing consciousness of man towards the Spiritual consciousness of his Creator which brought his world into creation, while the cross-bar illustrates the undeveloped consciousness of mankind and reflects the limitations of the material world in which he resides.

The symbol of the Master on the Cross, is the symbol of the true Light of this Consciousness being misunderstood and rejected in favour of materialism where wealth and power come first. Yet the Light remains and will always remain within every one of us whether we are aware of it or not.

Every religion rejoices in this Light. Throughout the ages it has been taught by the saints and seers and prophets, many of whom perished for their beliefs.

'I carry the Light within me', is recognised by artists, writers, poets and musicians, for it is the Light - the inner revolutionary Christ Light. It changes lives.

A great man was once asked if he had ever seen God. 'Yes,' he replied. 'Sometimes in the faces of my fellow men!'

What a wonderful answer! For they were the few who carried the Light of the Spirit into their lives.

This chapter was written at my desk facing the window which reflects a dull sky, and with no artificial aids for my half-blind sight.

If we can accept that we are all the children of God, and the Christ Spirit dwells within us, why then are we afraid to accept that those who have passed into Spirit are unable to communicate with us?

Why is communication between this world and the next viewed with suspicion? Why have we allowed our minds to be tainted by suggestions from some that such communication is false and evil and must be avoided?

Are our friends any different from the living companions that they were when in the human body?

Are they not Spirit, as they ever were? Do they not still love us, and want to care for us as previously?

I agree that communication has been used by some so-called mediums for wrong purposes and their readings for money have been little less than fortune-telling. My own view is that neither payment nor favours should ever be made.

A gift is a gift as much now as when seers and prophets of old used these gifts of the Spirit, and should always be given freely and reverently.

Only then would the stigma still attached to communication with Spirits become workable and with a deep understanding on the In-dwelling Spirit the Light which Jesus brought?

This is a *gift* to be used freely to prove that souls in the world of matter or in the next world are of one family, God's creation, and the Christ Spirit is in all of them. The great understanding and comprehension of humanity's role in the Divine scheme of Life, means surely that spirit communicates with spirit.

Our dear ones, as well as great Masterminds now in the world of Spirit want to help and advise us in order to prevent us making mistakes as we stubbornly try to assert

our small wills and desires.

Such psychic powers of far-seeing and true-hearing and of healing are accepted in the Bible by St. Paul as 'gifts of the Spirit'. And so they are.

Why then is Frances Banks writing this book, if not for this reason? She has stooped down, as it were, from her place in Paradise to write this book as well as her former one, *Testimony of Light*, to spread what she knows is the eternal truth.

Her work on earth was suddenly ended by her last and fatal illness. I recall her despair as she cried to me, 'I am going to die. If only I could have had seven more years in which to finish my work! Seven years would have been enough.'

Only lately have I realised that she has taken advantage of the gift of hearing in which she believed to write these two books. I am happy and honoured in trying to finish her work.

Surely Frances, whose countenance as her friends saw it, reflected the Spirit of Light, is part of that Light and Truth which is pouring through me!

CHAPTER XIV

Nearer than Hands or Feet

At the beginning of World War II in 1939, I was living as a paying guest with a Quaker family in the South of England. At the Quaker meetings which I often attended I met, and grew to admire, two outstanding people, an elderly man and his wife. 'The Society of Friends does not agree with violence of any kind, including warfare between nations. These two leaders were, like many others, conscientious objectors. They lived quiet, peaceful lives, working and helping others.

One day they received papers requesting them to appear before a Tribunal.

They felt that the inclusion of their names was ridiculous; however they knew they possessed much influence in the antiwar movements.

The day for their trial finally arrived and they set out by train to attend it. Later, they told me of their experiences.

'Our compartment was empty,' they said. 'We were calm, but we did not speak. I had been praying. My husband sat with closed eyes. Suddenly I thought of my parents, wise, kindly people who had spent their lives helping others less fortunate. For a moment I felt that they were with us, that my mother's face smiled at me. I put out my hand and touched my husband. 'It will be all right,' I whispered.

He squeezed my hand. 'We are in the Spirit,' was his firm reply. 'Be still and *know*.'

I felt that I knew.

'The Spirit is with us,' I agreed, 'nearer than hands or feet.' Need I add that their case was dismissed?

This simple story is quoted as a prelude to the following communications from Frances Banks. Indeed, her mind announced her subject when, on awakening one morning there echoed through my brain the words 'Chapter ? Nearer than hands or feet,' and I sat down and wrote it.

The chapter was to illustrate the book's title *The Challenging Light*, for that Light which the Christ brought to the earth is, even after two thousand years, not yet truly understood or practised.

The prevalent idea in past centuries that the soul of man must continue into his new life after death, 'bringing his sheaves', has little credence in this modern age of astronauts and space-ships, computers and robots. And rightly so.

Yet there is a truth dimly realised in such an idyll, as I am informed by the Messengers of Truth who join with Frances Banks in the inspiration through which this book was written. A soul indeed carries with him his successes and his failures. A Life span on earth, even for the poorest, most ignorant is, so to speak, 'counted' in the eternal evolution of the human spirit. Surely the parable of the talents applies to the future world equally with our physical existence.

I am instructed that first we must realise the meaning and the implication of Mind - the Creative Mind of the Creator, which mankind has termed the Holy Spirit.

Mind is eternal, and eternally creative; mankind is made in the image of God. Surely then, each one of us is included in this vast Creative Source, even if only as a microscopic atom of created creativity. Our achievements and our failures will decide our place in God's House of many mansions. Shall we not step proudly forward when we see - as we shall in the next consciousness - that we have not laboured in vain but have fulfilled those tasks set out for us.

For is there not Order and Plan for every human soul, whether it follows this Creative Word or not? The sheaves are his achievements and will be judged accordingly.

As Frances explained in *Testimony of Light* there comes the judging of one's own life. This is the commencement of a future Path, a greater achievement, as the challenge of the Eternal Light judges the past, and points to future growth.

Frances Banks

Just as philosophers, artists, inventors and explorers set the pattern of their time on earth, so the Great Ones, the Advanced Souls here, lead the masses onward into greater understanding.

In the earth world the barriers of birth, heritage, education and sex limit us in our progress and sadly the masses remain uninformed.

Here, all have equal opportunity. A soul progresses as he learns to absorb and join

the Challenging Light of the Eternal Spirit. The way is open to everyone. The soul itself chooses its own path to salvation.

Those who while still on earth have believed that they are part of the Illuminating Light of the Spirit will surely advance more rapidly towards the Higher Spheres where they will find those Beings who were the great men and women of their time, and will be permitted to learn more of the mysteries of life and of evolution.

In the Halls of Learning such mysteries are explained in order to enrich the life of the soul. Throughout eternity man has returned of his own accord in order to discover that Centre within himself.

It is this inmost centre which is the evolution of God the Creative Spirit in His created.

As souls progress towards an understanding of the great challenge of the Eternal Spirit, so there comes upon them the longing to try again, to take back what they have achieved into a material life, into rebirth and re-experience on lower planes.

‘Heaven lies about us in our infancy,’ wrote Wordsworth

Alas, that this lower plane of thought tries to destroy the Truth. Instead, we are taught dangerous half-truths which we accept, and thus we mould our future on the slippery steps of riches and power.

Jesus brought us the message of Truth. Yet His message was too simple for mankind. It has taken two thousand years of half-truths to drag us down to a fear-ridden society where evil and lust are dominant. No wonder the very earth trembles with its hidden load of nuclear weapons, and the seas rage about the submerged vessels with their torpedoes of death.

The most urgent lesson that humanity must learn and practise is the survival of the race itself, and that man cannot kill his neighbour. He can only destroy the body, which will eventually return to the earth again.

Man’s Spirit lives on - to the place that is reserved for it, whether it be called Heaven or by any other name. There, amidst sanity and beauty it will learn to recognise its faults, its failures, and the real understanding of truth.

For the Spirit of man is indestructible.

There are, of course, many mansions and other worlds, although it appears that most returning souls turn back to earth for their future lives in order to work out their Karma.

The Spirit of the Creator works in us and through us, and throughout our entire thought life. It has been well said that ‘what we think, we are.’

Thus, if we think with the Spirit and through the Spirit, which is God’s Law, we strengthen our links with the Spirit, and we shall discover that the Spirit works for us!

If thought is concentrated on peace and love those qualities will be yours. Conversely, thoughts of fear, hate, jealousy and so on are negative, and bring about the very disaster that was feared.

Helen Greaves

Let me illustrate this with a personal experience. When we lived in Canada, we had two dear friends. The husband was a tall, well-made man of easy temperament, kindly and happy-go-lucky. His wife, a good wife and mother, was obsessed with worry and fear of what might happen. She worried all the time she sat beside him in their car, criticising his driving, although she herself could not drive.

‘You’ll kill us both one of these days!’ It was her constant cry of fear.

Her husband laughed at her. Meanwhile, she became more and more obsessed with the thought of accidents, burglary and illness. Nobody could dispel these black thoughts.

Then one day it happened.

There was a terrible accident in which both were killed. And he had not even been driving! Their own car had developed engine trouble and they had accepted a lift from a friend. At a dangerous corner the car had plunged over a precipice onto the rocks below.

The Spirit works through the thought processes. Jesus preached, ‘only believe and know’. Faith is thought enlightened by the Spirit. And faith moves mountains.

CHAPTER XV

The Spirit is Stirring

The simplest events are often the most dramatic. Thus this chapter on ‘The Life after Death’ seeks to explain the meaning of the continuity of life which has remained a mystery for so many centuries.

We may ask ourselves why Frances Banks, a committed Christian, and a member of an Anglican Order for much of her life, has chosen to remove this cloak of mystery at this time in history.

We who live in the late nineteen hundreds should surely have no doubts about the parlous state of our world. Many live in fear of nuclear war. Peace movements are forming in many nations. Arms, armaments and cruise missiles are daily building up to frightening levels. Money is being poured into so-called defence by every nation.

We live under the threat of global destruction. But the Spirit is stirring within us. People are beginning to ask questions.

Who are we? What have we been taught? What is death? Can people ‘come back’

from the dead?

Let us go back to Frances' words of hope earlier in this book. She made the extraordinary statement - and since in her new consciousness she can see further than we can I do not doubt her words - that a Spiritual revolution will change and lift our lives by the end of this century.

For we cannot,' she said, 'pass into the next century as we are today!' To me that brings one deeply needed hope. There will be no nuclear war! Otherwise there would be no simple starting of a new century. Such a revolution in our spiritual beliefs and lives would change the world. The fear of death would be removed. Perhaps this is the true purpose of this book. I believe it is so.

When I spoke recently to a clergyman about a possible spiritual revolution, he said, eagerly, 'You are right, Helen. It has already started!'

It was not long after this assurance that a friend brought me a cutting from the *Daily Telegraph* of 5 April, 1983.

It was headed 'University starts M.A. Course in Life after Death.'

I could scarcely believe my eyes! A subject that for so long had been taboo - I have even been accused of practising black magic - was being examined! I read on eagerly.

The University of Wales is offering what is thought to be Britain's first post-graduate course for the study of life after death.

The one year Master of Arts Course is entitled 'Death and Immortality in Western Thought'. It is to be introduced at St. David's University College, Lampeter, Dyfed, in October.

The report went on to describe the kind of studies, including accounts from people who have been close to death or claim experience or knowledge of reincarnation.

I was immediately excited at the prospect, for the idea of the Course will certainly quickly spread to other Universities.

The possibility of reincarnation being a fact will be discussed with lectures for and against, and the students are encouraged to form their own opinions, and write theses on the subject.

A smoke screen which has lasted for centuries is being dispersed by the courage of a Welsh clergyman, Dr. Paul Badman, Senior Lecturer in Theology at the College. He has been quoted as saying, 'I, for example, believe there is a very good case for believing in a future life, whereas the opposite case will be presented by members of the Philosophy department, leaving students to make up their own minds.'

Great oaks from little acorns grow. May this new venture be an acorn seed for the future growth of a great tree of knowledge to guide mankind through the closing years of this stormy century.

Now to a second realisation of the simplicity of Truth. It happened one morning in early March. I had sat down, as was my practice, to a short meditation preparatory to starting my writing. As I did so, I became aware in my mind of a woman trying to contact me. Indeed I could almost see her with her fair hair and fine features. Immediately I knew that she had a message.

But it was not for me, it was for her friend. And her friend, I realised, was my friend, who had been so interested in the writing of this book, and who had been a firm rock for all my vapourings of weakness during its composition.

I settled down to listen. Having no idea of her identity it was all I could do. When I had learned enough I decided that if this was a true message, the person would come to see me. And so she did!

I began by describing my informant. My friend listened but made no comment until I said, 'This woman was the only friend who called you by a special nickname.'

'Now I know her. And she *still* lives in Australia.'

'Still?'

'Yes.'

I was astonished, for I had decided that this was a message from a companion who had passed into the next world.

But my listener understood her message and corroborated the facts I had given her.

'But she is alive?' I protested. 'This is telepathy in this world, and not with the next.'

How very strange! I puzzled over it because nothing like such clear telepathy has been mine before.

Later, I learned that this communicator had recently lost her husband, and my friend had sent her my two books, *Testimony of Light*, and *Wheel of Eternity*. 'I should soon be hearing if they have arrived,' she told me.

When, some days later, the letter came through the letter box, part of it was read aloud to me. 'Please give Helen Greaves my love, and thank her for writing these two wonderful books!'

And the headed date was around the date of the telepathic communication.

This evidence of telepathy was quite bewildering. So now, said to myself, I was listening in and invading other people's privacy. I was not happy.

A few days after this I awoke with the words of a new chapter ringing through my head. But as I had decided that the book was finished I was not inclined to write more. Had I not already completed all that needed to be said about Life after Death?

But my inspirer who in life had never lacked force of character, went on battling with me, until at last I *knew*.

This chapter had to be written, and it would complete all the explanations of the earlier writing. And it was so simple.

I felt suddenly, that I had just jumped my last fence! The dreaded 'Beecher's Brook' was behind me, and now it was a straight run to the winning post.

For the explanation which Frances in her wider knowledge had communicated had the simplicity of Truth.

'Do you not see that beyond all the mystery and secrecy the answer is simple? Communication between minds in their earth experience and those between our world and yours exist in the wider consciousness of the mind.

'The human mind, although stifled by the concrete of materialism, sometimes experiences flashes of intuition, along those tiny channels of inspiration which prove that communication between people as well as between the unseen worlds is always possible. Why is it therefore that so many regard the higher consciousness of the mind with suspicion and doubt? 'Telepathy,' Frances assured me, 'is a development of the mind. It is a quality of "listening" beyond conventionally accepted limits.

'When mankind learns to accept the Spirit of the Creator as part of himself, so will his mind consciousness expand beyond earth limitations. Thus, the Light which Jesus emphasised as being in Him as well as in His hearers will, in the fullness of time, lift humanity to the realisation of its true place in the Cosmos, and remove the doubts and fears which restrict our spiritual progress.

'This is the challenge of the Challenging Light of the Spirit - the consciousness that was in the Christ when He said: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you."

'The remaining years of this century will decide whether we are on the Highway to True Living, or the Highway to Nothing.'

CHAPTER XVI

A Meditation on the Spirit

I *This meditation is in three parts*

We are reviewing our lives, and looking into the future at the Work of the Spirit which has brought us so many joys and sorrows.

Become comfortable, relax, uncross the legs, feet firmly on the ground.

Take three deep breaths slowly. In - Hold it - Out rhythmically.

II *Picture*

Begin the meditation by building up a picture.

You are standing just beyond a patch of glorious Light, facing a long bridge with

three pylons over a river. The ascent to the bridge of one step is almost in darkness - yet from it a glimmer of light grows stronger; it is quite luminous at the end of the bridge, although you cannot yet discern what lies beyond it.

III *Meditation. The Way and the Light*

Begin the meditation by seeing yourself step onto the bridge. You have now come to the beginning of your life, for the stepping onto the bridge signifies your birth.

The first step to the first pylon represents the early years of your earth life. Begin to meditate on it - your childhood, youth, maturity. Give thanks for the happy times, for love of parents, for family life, for all the pleasant experiences of life. Realise that a Spirit of good, of knowledge, of understanding and of awareness is growing within you. Say to yourself, 'I carry the Light of the Spirit of Christ within me which guided and so often gave me moments of beauty and peace.'

Now recall the difficult times, the mistakes, the falls from grace. Try to work out the reasons for them, but blame nobody but yourself. Try to see how the Spirit of good saved you from even worse trials.

Give thanks to God. Repeat again to yourself. 'I carry the Spirit of Light within me. It leadeth me.'

Now be still and know this as you give thanks.

IV *The Second Pylon*

This represents the period in your life from thirty to sixty. Much has happened during those years, often bringing pain and sorrow.

Do not dwell upon these but try to see how the God-Spirit led, protected and sustained you. Think of the friends who helped, the dear ones who were with you. Give thanks for the mind and spirit which brought attainment and fulfilment. Meditate upon these, and see how the Spirit led you. 'I carry the Spirit of Light within me to help me in all my ways.' Know that you are in the care of God's Spirit which is alive within you. 'I carry the Light of the Spirit within me.'

If you have not reached your sixtieth year, you could stop your review here, giving thanks for the future and knowing that you will be led by the Spirit. The Spirit of the Creator is within me, I am healed, and blessed and guided. All is well.'

V *The Third Pylon*

This next space on the bridge represents the years of old age, from sixty to ninety.

If you have dreaded or feared this period do not dwell upon these aspects. Death comes to all of us: there is nothing to fear. Think of this end to life with trust and

know that you will be met by your dear ones and find a greater understanding.

‘God is. The Imprisoned Splendour of His Spirit is within me. I carry the Light of the Spirit within me to care for me, to guide and uphold me. I work with the Spirit to fulfil that which I came to earth to do. I give thanks for the joys, the successes and the presence of the Spirit in my life, and for the peace I now feel. The Spirit is ever present. Thanks be to God.’

Open your arms and your heart and send this Spirit of Peace into the world, to your friends and to those who suffer and live in darkness.

‘Let the Spirit of Christ live in our hearts and minds.’

Relax - Return to daily consciousness.

Finale

This book was started with the thought strongly in my mind, and also, it is clear, in the higher mind of Frances Banks.

The thought has been expressed earlier in this volume. ‘When an idea has reached fruition, nothing can stop it.’ Today, as I repeat these words after the long hours of work, the truth of this statement is confirmed.

Here before me, lie the pages, scrawled with writing from black-ink pen, and completed, without my having been able to read one chapter, not even one page.

Nothing *had* stopped the idea, not even advanced age, nor my lack of sight, nor the realisation that its wider horizons of knowledge may prove controversial to many readers, especially those who have accepted the hope of ‘eternal bliss’ in the after life.

Nothing can stop it. And why?

Because more and more people are turning away from old, worn-out beliefs, and are now ready to welcome truth, even if it is less acceptable. So many still remember the terrors and sacrifices of two World Wars, the memories of which will never be forgotten.

As I have already written, the idea was born in Frances Banks’ mind when a former prisoner from Maidstone Gaol returned from the dead, and assured her that her last words to him were beyond doubt. ‘Five minutes after you die you will be exactly the same!’

‘Exactly the same’ cannot, of course, mean the same bodily, but the mind and thoughts remain unchanged.

May the spark which has, during the last months, burned brightly in both of us encourage wider knowledge, greater peace and understanding on the earth dwellers.

When humanity accepts and reverences the great Spirit of the Creator, then all races

will dwell in peace together as brothers.

Grant that this wisdom may be understood before man is allowed to destroy himself and his world.

God bless you all!

Epilogue

So to the last word.

The prologue introduced the Idea of the reality of the Spirit of man's Creator in both his human experience and in the spiritual awareness after the destruction of the body. Frances Banks (Sister Frances Mary for many years of earth life) has described her life after death with a simple vividness and a growing understanding of the experiences of other souls with whom she has been in contact.

My role has been that of the channel through which this knowledge could be physically transcribed onto paper. My pen became the brush of the artist, and for that I give much thanks.

A few weeks ago, I watched a fascinating programme on television. An artist was painting a picture of an elephant. First one saw the outline, the great ears, the massive legs, but then, as he added a stroke here, a shadow there, the picture came alive. He told us, although it was obvious, that he loved and admired elephants, seeing them as the most wonderful of beasts, with tremendous strength and patience. And as he painted he talked, as though coaxing the animal to life. A most unusual and moving experience.

For the artist *was* that brush with its oil colours. Through him poured his love and admiration for his subject.

The programme brought home to me the reality that I too was but the pen and the hand that moved it. Through my pen poured the inspiration of the mind of Minds.

For within and beyond it, through the pen and brush, lie the Ideas from which inspiration flows.

Humbly, I ask my readers to know that I am but that pen, transcribing the inspiration from the Eternal Spirit.