



Miracle Images

Rolf A. F. Witzsche

Technology enables us to reach into space and see what no man has seen before.
But what do we behold if we aim to see with our eyes closed and our mind shackled?

A fictional war story from a novel by Rolf A. F. Witzsche.

What really is it that we want to achieve with space exploration? Do we want to sample ancient rocks from distant planets in the search for traces of life? Or do we ultimately want to explore "new worlds and new civilizations" as a TV series once suggested? But why would we bother with this this, provided we could reach that far, seeing that we have not yet begun to fully explore our own civilization and the dimension of our own humanity? We look at ourselves with closed eyes and a shackled mind. Wouldn't we look at the universe in the same fashion and miss the very point of our exploration?

The story, *Miracle Images*, is about a fantastic space voyage of many years in duration, to the closest solar system. At mid point a scout probe returns with miraculous images of the targeted planet, including TV broadcast recordings. Everyone on board begins to learn the new language. By the time the planet is reached, everyone is fluent. With great anticipation a shuttle is launched, contacts are made, except nobody thought that an advanced culture, like the one that had created the marvelous structures that everybody had seen images of, could be caught up in a cultural decay like a dying bird that has broken its wings and thus treats its visitors accordingly.

The story, *Miracle Images*, is a SCIFI space exploration story from the novel, [Flight without Limits](#), by Rolf A. F. Witzsche. The story ends in tragedy as the explorers step into an environment of cultural war.

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When I came into the atrium, the place was being decorated as if for a party. It was early morning. The domed ceiling was dark orange, still. The passing of the day had been color coded into the lighting throughout the ship. Night was indicated with the ceilings becoming a dark blue, while at mid day, the lights were brilliantly white.

Below the dusk orange dome of the atrium, paper streamers crossed the open space in every direction, intersecting horizontally and vertically, illumined with lanterns strung from railing to railing, whole strings of them extending from floor to floor.

"What's up?" I asked the nearest person with amazement, who shrugged his shoulders. That's when I noticed Natalia. She appeared to be equally puzzled.

"What's with the Chinese paper lanterns?" I asked.

"Aren't they cute?" she replied.

Some of the lanterns looked like planets floating in space.

"Maybe it is the captain's birthday?" I joked.

"I think it's for a wedding, or a carnival dance," she said and began to grin.

"Hey, a carnival would be great, wouldn't it be?"

"Where have you been?" said someone. "Tomorrow is homecoming day. The return of our first surveyor probe." The voice came from a girl who was directing the re-arrangement of potted plants on the main floor. "Tomorrow we'll have our first close up view of Alpha Centauri!"

Of course! I gradually remembered. Five probes had been launched before the ship got under way, the first one twenty months in advance. It had been designated for a planet-system-mapping mission. The probe was to record all orbital paths, photograph the surface of every major planet, and then rendezvous with the ship at a predetermined point in space.

The bulletin board revealed the agenda of the celebrations to come. There was to be a full crew meeting with a formal luncheon at noon, followed by the arrival of the probe within some hours. The final event would take place at the atrium, where the captain would unveil a scale model of Alpha Centauri that would be constructed from measurements brought back by the probe. Together with this, a photo exhibition would be set up, reconstructed from video scans the probe was expected to bring. This event was scheduled for noon the following day or for the day after that. And in between, somewhere, would be a computer graphics demonstration of the gravitational interaction of the three-sun system, mathematically reconstructed, all from the measurements of the probe.

The probe appeared to be a gold mine of information.

"That's going to be some party!" said Natalia excitedly.

"We will have a chance to see what no man has ever seen before," said the girl who was in charge of the decoration. "We will be mankind's first to have a look at another solar system."

I could sense her excitement. I looked around quickly for the captain and then hugged her.

This was indeed a celebration. I was glad Martin hadn't shown me the Alpha Centauri system, yet. This was our victory, honestly wrought against the most imprisoning limits, pushing back frontiers to the very edge of the 'possible.' That, too, must have been the way Bohr and his group started out, rather than taking their giant leap from a standing start. Even a super nova has a long history as a star while it gathers up energy over countless millions of years before the super nova explosion springs it into a different form of life in the space of one single, fast, final second. Advancing with the best of our material technologies was our stepping stone towards the freedoms inherent in the Bohr/Miller effect. And now we were on the verge of a significant victory, a super nova in the universe if profound discoveries.

"Not even the crossing of billions of light years of space, visiting planets of other galaxy clusters, measures up to the significance of seeing this probe coming in," I said to Natalia.

"You dreamer!" she said, and hugged me.

Her hug somehow felt different after the mental odyssey in which Odessa had left her mark. It didn't have the connotation of being anything physical. It was perhaps another historic event where the human experience was drawn beyond the limits imposed by its traditional material mentality. Natalia looked up and smiled. She felt something too. She obviously did.

The luncheon went exactly as planned. Nobody worked that day, except for a few volunteers who were involved with the meals. But the probe didn't come until six that evening. Considering that it had traveled over sixty trillion kilometers, it was more exactly on time than any train or plane ever had been in all of human history.

The computer simulation was ready by midnight. "That's a hell of a good job," said a voice from behind me in the theater. It was Martin.

"At first, I was fascinated by this ship," he whispered, "because I have a weakness for primitive technology. But this one here is top notch, there's nothing primitive about it."

I leaned back and grinned; this was music to my ears.

The simulation showed every planet that circled the three suns, including their moons. The simulation could be speeded up, so that the interaction of the various gravitational fields was clearly visible. Also the relative size of each planet was indicated, together with an estimated possibility of finding humanoid life there. One planet showed some hope. It was orbiting the sun marked Gamma. The planet was indicated to have a relative Earth-mass of point eight.

"Have you ever been on Gamma Point Eight," I whispered to Martin.

He shook his head. "Maybe Bohr has, I must ask him."

Moments later he tapped me on the shoulder. "Odessa asked me to convey her love," he whispered.

"Eh, who is this Odessa?" Natalia got into the act.

I introduced Natalia to him.

"Odessa is my wife," said Martin, "whom your friend had an affair with a couple of days ago."

Natalia was taking a deep breath, but Martin waved her off: "It wasn't anything physical, I'm sure of that! They just had an afternoon together in my house, and slept together one night."

"What house?"

"Oh, I'm sorry. I had invited your friend to my house on Bohr's planet, that's three galaxy clusters from here. Bohr required my help for a while, so he suggested that Odessa look after your friend. I'm sure James couldn't have told you about it, he doesn't fully understand himself, what had happened."

Natalia reacted like I did at first, with her mouth open, speechless, staring into space.

"If you want to get away from this ship for a holiday, my house is open to you both, any time," he added with his usual grin.

Before she could reply Martin was gone, and I was left with the momentous task of explaining the unexplainable.

Somehow, in between all this occurred the great unveiling of the model of Alpha Centauri. Captain Matthew, or Mat, as everyone now called him, opened the ceremony with a speech, a short speech about the model and those who made it, and then opened the floor to a dance. Strangely, the person he chose to have his first dance with was Natalia. For the moment, it appeared that the bitter war between us that nearly spilled out over the whole ship had been won. We had been successful in taking away his battlefield with no loss to ourselves. Perhaps, he felt himself to have been the victor, since we no longer challenged his austere morality. But the real victory was ours, since we had learned that the freedom indicated in the constitution was merely a challenge to expand our individually, instead of a license to force anyone else onto this platform. Whoever wrote the constitution must have been advanced enough to recognize that the wider horizons it encourages inevitably become a protection for those left mentally behind.

Looking back over this period, I had no doubt that Martin would have suggested that warfare is an invalid concept imposed solely by matter based limitations, as are time, distance, and separation. It seemed we didn't have to play any game at all. Our association was closer, but no longer of a type that the captain could sink his teeth in and bite. Neither was this accomplishment entirely due to Martin's teaching. He mere opened a door. The rest came as a consequence, almost by itself.

Naturally, Martin was welcome at the ship at any time, and his assistance was well appreciated. By no means did I count myself as an equal to him. It didn't seem wise, for instance, to apply the Bohr/Miller effect for anything more than just a few small steps.

When Martin came back in a month, both Natalia and Jill were ready to allow him to provide us with a first hand look at the Alpha Centauri system. We explored every planet. Some had thick forests, lush vegetation, but no animal life. Most planets, though, were bare. Only Gamma .8 showed some promise of being interesting. As the computer had rightly estimated, it did have the right atmosphere, and it did have some people on it, similar to human beings. Martin suggested, however, upon closer investigation, that we should not make contact at this time. He said that he felt they would not be able to understand our presence. "Making contact now might spoil your chances later," he suggested.

Martin also said something scary. He felt that the people on this planet were in some state of silent war with each other, which he said we should be cautious about. He suggested that the society on the planet appeared to be a very primitive type of society that had not as yet

developed the mental technology to exist without war.

"How can you tell that?" Natalia asked.

"That's easy," answered Martin. "They have not developed any significant space presence, or any space presence at all. War usually prevents the kind of scientific and technological development that a space presence requires. You'll most likely find a primitive, and possibly brutal, if not fascist society."

"Fascist?" Natalia repeated.

"Oh you can handle that," Martin grinned, "but why would you be interested in such a society?"

After our short excursion to the Alpha Centauri system, Martin invited us for a week to his home on Bohr's planet where he and Odessa showed us around, cared for us, and gave us a wonderful vacation in the sun. At the end, as any good host would, Martin escorted us graciously back to our ship.

In the months and years that followed, Martin came less often, maybe once every two months. But his style never changed. It was as always, bang - super nova time! We must have explored half the universe by the time the ship arrived at Alpha Centauri. We have encountered civilizations at their Stone Age stage, as well as at their most advanced stage that even Bohr could not comprehend, and virtually at every imaginable stage in between. We have seen the Hitlers at war. There are always some Hitlers at war, somewhere in the universe. And we have seen civilizations in which the Hitlers would never have a chance. In time, a definite pattern emerged. Limitation and war went together, with the wars being interrupted only by periods of poverty, or else there was freedom and peace found in an atmosphere of genuine prosperity. There was never a mingling of the two.

Bohr explained this phenomenon by suggesting that war, poverty, and limitations are one and the same thing and are all invalid phenomena. He said that freedom, peace, and prosperity, in contrast, must be understood as valid expressions of universal principles. Their substance is real, rather than being a myth. He also said that the two groups are as diametrically distinct from one another as if they pertained to a separate universe. This confirmed the theory by which he lived. One thing, though, puzzled our friend Bohr, how we could shuttle so unaffectedly between one and the other.

I assured him that we didn't really do that. I assured him that we merely shuttled between two of the same kind of universe. The ship wasn't a scene of war, poverty and limitation anymore, I affirmed most vigorously, at least not in the grosser sense of the word.

Bohr had to agree. In fact he came to visit us on the ship as often as we were guests on his planet. After each tour of his 'exploration' with us, we would visit there for a week and be back at the ship without missing a shift. Bohr, Martin, and Odessa would come to the ship occasionally for a concert or a movie, or when a special event happened that promised to become interesting. Occasionally Martin and Odessa would also invite us to the Earth for a symphony concert. As far as he was concerned, there was no greater music found anywhere in the universe than that of the Earth.

The hardest part of those concert trips was not being able to make ourselves known to our families back home. We could see them, but not talk, for their own protection. If we did, we

would jolt them into our world. He warned that they would not survive the transition. Only once was I able to let them know that I still cared for them. When the maple tree died that had always stood in front of our home, I persuaded Martin into replacing it with one of those lovely flowering trees that grow in great profusion on Bohr's planet.

He did it as a scientific experiment, to see if such a transplant could be done.

One of the special occasions, for which even Werner Heisenberg came to the ship, was the expected arrival of the last scout probe from the planet system. Werner Heisenberg loved the excitement. By then everyone on board spoke about Alpha Centauri and had gone almost berserk over this little planet. The probe was to collect high-resolution pictures of the planet surfaces, monitor radio and television broadcasts if there were any, pinpoint their sources and do some general infrared mapping. A highly paralleled, Josephson based computer, had been readied up during the preceding week to do instant video processing and selection of the vast amount of data the probe had collected over its one year mission. Also the computer was programmed for language decoding, in case there were radio broadcasts.

Bohr himself called the occasion a milestone in human history. There was probably no man more excited than him, when the probe was locked itself into a synchronous flight pass with the ship and began to transmit its data.

There was only one person on our ship who seemed to be simultaneously everywhere where things were happening. This person was Bohr. Once I even saw him giving orders to the captain, and the captain following his command. Maybe he, more than anyone else on this ship, realized the significance this event had for mankind. It was as though he could read the future, which he claimed he could, since the concept of time and future was invalid anyway in his frame of reference.

What amazed Martin, who still looked upon the ship as a somewhat primitive world, was the fact that an automated probe could actually function flawlessly for seven years in some of the most hostile environments, perform a complex mission along the way, and navigate itself to a rendezvous with the ship at a closing speed of over twice the speed of light. Seeing its pictures of rocks and craters scanned on the screen totally amazed Martin.

The theater was crammed to the last square inch of floor space. Within fifteen minutes, the computer had selected the data of Gamma .8 as the most promising, and given it high priority for transmission. We saw pictures of fields that looked like they may have been cultivated. When we saw the first traces of the city, everyone cheered and yelled. There was no peace for at least fifteen minutes.

By this time the screen went blank and a television broadcast appeared, which had been electronically translated into English. Bohr was beside himself. The language of other civilizations had always been a problem for him. The broadcast was in color and showed erect entities not so much different than we were. Their hair was not as dense, their skin darker, and their eyes were very similar to those of the Chinese.

The show we saw appeared to be a detective story. There were people peering around corners and through windows, there was a chase scene by bicycle. We didn't see any cars. Was this from the present time, or a movie from the past? This turned out to be the main questions that surfaced.

The outside scenes showed an elegant, modern city. We saw tall buildings lavishly constructed with generous use of plate glass and some kind of marble. Only the mode of transportation didn't fit. Everything that moved seemed to be out of step with the city's modern architecture. We saw four wheeled buggies in the streets instead of cars, drawn by animals akin to oxen. The only modern piece of transportation we saw was one lonely electric streetcar.

"Something is wrong," Martin agreed with Bohr. "You can't construct these giant glass castles with oxen drawn transportation."

"Maybe they ran out of oil?" I suggested.

"Nonsense," said Bohr. "They can only have run out of their soul: oil isn't everything. Anyone can harvest nuclear fusion if enough effort is expended. But if you let go of your soul, you will find this effort too expensive, and you'll die. The most potent killer in the universe is a primitive lifestyle. I've seen it over and over again."

"Yap!" Martin agreed.

"It's not going to be a picnicking, landing down there," said Werner Heisenberg. "Look at their faces, they don't look happy, they don't even look alive."

"The light is gone out in them," said Martin.

"You're wasting your effort going down there, trying to learn something," said Bohr to me in his usual straightforward manner, with the captain sitting two rows in front of us.

He turned around to us, "that all nonsense! Open your eyes, man! I see a rich society down there. I see no beggars. I see no one in sloppy clothes, starved or destitute sleeping on street corners. The city looks clean, not overcrowded, there is peace and order. And the lack of cars; that's wonderful! I'd prefer animal carts a thousand times over our own gasoline driven, air poisoning traffic." He turned around again, not even waiting for an answer. Bohr didn't give him one either.

"A society is like a star," Bohr whispered to me. "If they haven't accumulated enough gravity within themselves, mentally, they'll reach a threshold where the structure falls apart on which most people's livelihood depends. Without technologies and industries, whole cultures vanish. So what do you expect to learn from them? The young won't remember how things once were, or they may regard it as not important to them. Poverty has become a religion to them, like with your captain who rather sees clean streets than people in them, or orderly stagnation on his ship, instead of our excitement with living, and with freedom and caring."

"And the old people won't tell you anything either," added Odessa, "they likely never knew what hit them."

"You should look for a society that had enough inner strength," Bohr came back, "strength enough to get past the threshold of the old matter based poverty syndrome as you are doing right now inside this ship. I know several societies of this caliber, from which you could learn a great deal, one in particular that I have named Odessa, of which even I could learn a lot if I were able to decode their language."

"Ah, I see, you have a plan for this ship," said Natalia.

"Well, shouldn't it be used the best way possible when an entire civilization is at stake?" Bohr came back, whispering, unabashed. "We could have the ship in orbit above Odessa planet within seconds," Martin suggested. "We could...."

"Do you really believe these people will let you have their ship," Odessa interrupted, "especially when they're so close to the goal that they waited five years for, which, at the moment, looks quite wonderful in their eyes?"

Nobody answered her for a very long time. Monotonously the broadcast continued. Most of the people around us, however, seemed to be exited. The detective-show was followed by a sort of news cast that showed the city again. The picture was the same. It also showed some scenes of the countryside, a tumult of manual labor harvesting a grain crop.

"We could call for a vote on the ship," I suggested to Bohr. He didn't answer.

One thing I figured out about Bohr, when apparently he felt that I had asked a stupid question to which I should know the answer myself, he never bothered to respond. At first I was annoyed, now I respected that. I didn't really want to be taught. However, I also found that I could rely on him, questioning me, should I come up with a wrong conclusion.

"I guess you can't impose a democratic decision on something that pertains to the very depth of one's existence," I came back.

Bohr still didn't answer, which meant that I was either completely right or would soon realize my error.

"We must let the children have their wish," said Bohr after a long, long silence, as though he had to re-think his plan.

"Going to Alpha Centauri will still take another nine months," I commented, "while humanity back home is at the threshold of nuclear war, economic chaos, and a rapidly spreading disease that may over-power the human race."

As neither Bohr nor Martin answered, it dawned on me that the concept of time had no invalidity with them as they had amply demonstrated. So I dropped the subject, puzzled to what would happen now. One thing I realized, too, that time was of utmost importance to whom it had significance, that it had captured them as slaves, blinded them with its limits that they could not see the substance of a world apart from it.

Bohr and Werner went home after that, while Martin and Odessa remained for a while to "keep an eye on things," as they said. Bohr might have wished that he had stayed, too. Hardly eight hours had passed when a complete language training package had been produced, with written text, video, and computer generated sound pattern as a pronunciation aid. A half a day earlier no one on ship, except us, knew that these people existed. Now, with the aid of computer assisted translation, we would have been able to converse with them in their own language. At the projected time of landing the entire ship's business would be conducted in Gamma .8 language, as a final training effort. I suggested to Martin that the efficiency of our electronic information processing technology would impress even someone like Bohr.

"He'd become green with envy," said Martin.

Odessa laughed.

"Jokes aside," said Martin. "Our greatest problem is not being to communicate with other societies. Of course one can draw a lot of conclusions from what one sees, but without a machine of this caliber, one doesn't stand much of a chance."

"You mean you people don't know everything?" Natalia remarked.

"All we know, is how to bypass the laws of matter," said Martin.

"Actually we're not particularly smart and inventive when it comes to intelligent things. Being able to bypass some material limitations doesn't help much in extending one's genius. We are bound to the same basic method for investigation that you are bound to."

"We haven't crossed any threshold in this area yet," Martin added.

"We have a few advantages, though," Odessa admitted. "We don't have to expend any effort on our physical maintenance, which has put us a few steps ahead of you. Except we don't have the technological equipment to make use of this advantage to the fullest. The problem is that the more advanced one becomes, the greater is one's need for sophisticated high tech machinery to support one's work. Bohr has actually stopped doing research, some years ago, out of sheer frustration."

"Then he would love to have access to what this ship has to offer," I said to Odessa.

"He would come alive again," she replied.

"Haven't you noticed how boring he can be?" Martin added. "You should have seen him in the olden days! Bohr isn't his real name. We were all students of Niels Bohr in Copenhagen, at the institute of theoretical physics, and great fans of Heisenberg who worked in Leipzig and sometimes at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin. One day we wanted to hear a special lecture that Heisenberg was giving in Leipzig. We had heard some great stuff through the rumor mill coming out of Berlin that something big was going to be presented in Leipzig. We simply had to get to Leipzig, but it also looked like that the war was about to start. One of us started to fantasize, that if we reversed everything we had ever learned about the nature of matter, we might be able to leap over its hurdles and be in Leipzig and back all in the same day. How we got to the Amazon that day, nobody knows. All that anyone remembered was that our ideas became crazier and crazier as we joked with each other. It took us a whole week to get back from the Amazon, and then another year to figure out the scientific background to what had happened to us." Martin added that he got dispelled once for a week, for giving a paper on the theoretical possibility of reaching beyond the threshold of matter into another sphere of reality. "The official judgment was that such 'pranks' were dishonoring the institution. There were a lot of pranks perpetrated in those days," he said.

"That's when you left the planet?" I asked.

"Oh no!" he said. "We started small, going to England at first, then to Africa and South America." He said that a tiger attacked him once. The tiger seemed to come out of no-where. If it hadn't been for Odessa he would be dead. "Exploring planets seemed safer," he grinned. "Once we found a planet that suited us, we simply stayed. Alex called it Bohr's planet, since Niels Bohr had laid the foundation to the breakthrough that got us there. Somehow the name Bohr became attached to Alex from that day on. Besides, the two were quite alike in many ways."

"That certainly is an interesting tale," I said, "and you sure know how to tell them! But, how goes the real story?"

"Hey, that was the real story, with one exception maybe! Sometimes we wished we had taken the train to Leipzig that day. We feel there are many things yet to be learned that we have no access to. We've worked ourselves into an disadvantage now, out of which you might be able to help us, for your own good, of course."

"You mean by re-routing the ship to Odessa planet?" I replied with a grin.

"That may be quite a challenge," added Natalia. "If you knew our captain, you wouldn't even think it. He thinks this Gamma .8 place is heaven."

"Some heaven!" Martin replied.

Natalia was right. There was no way to stop the landing. Before the day was out, the command was given to prepare the ship for deceleration. The clock was set to minus four hundred hours.

Martin's comment was that the landing was sheer madness. He left immediately once the transition time was announced. His last words were that Bohr isn't going to sit idly by while the greatest opportunity for mankind goes out the window over the stubbornness of one single man.

A long sequence of preparations was required before retropower could be initiated. Furnishings had to be re-arranged and fastened to accommodate the impending shift in artificial gravity. The pool had to be emptied into tanks; plants stored away, lounges tied down. The sewer station suffered the greatest upset. Every plant had to be uprooted and packaged for re-use at an alternate site. Even the ship's engines had to undergo a major modification. All forty-eight units, arranged in twelve clusters, had to be relocated to the top of a six-hundred-foot tower and be tilted the opposite way, towards the ship, minus a twenty-degree outward projection in such a manner that their energy streams would be focused away from the hull. At first, the six-hundred-foot tower had to be erected. A base for it extended through the center of the engine platform. A million bolts, so it seemed, were required to hold it in place. I suddenly realized that the tower would have to withstand ten times the weight of the ship!

The engine platform was a world of grotesque metal sculpture interconnected by arrays of pipes, flexible hoses, and cables. I was part of the work team. Assembling the tower was like putting together a Mechano-set of gigantic proportions. Also, we were doing this work in the dark and lonely world of space. Only now, being in space was different. Traveling with Martin, I recalled being surrounded by a sea of stars. There were no stars overhead of the platform, and those on the horizon appeared yellow, turning darker and towards the red the higher they stood over us.

No one was startled, except me. Everyone else obviously expected the phenomenon. We were racing away from any light source that lay behind the ship so that an incoming wave appeared to be stretched in time, to a point where the eye could no longer recognize it as light. What had startled me about this phenomena, was that it didn't agree with my previous experience in space. Not the slightest trace of any red or blue shift was apparent when Martin had taken me to see the black hole. Maybe the difference came from being still tied to the sphere of reality that pertains to the ship, being tied to its atmosphere that extended from it into the space suit I was wearing. Being in space certainly felt different now. I felt encumbered by the unwieldy suit. Martin would laugh if he saw me like that, I was sure of it.

Once the tower was built, the entire engine platform was disassembled. The pieces were raised to the top of the tower where they were reassembled with all the engines gimballed below the platform, facing towards the ship but tilted away from it to deflect the retrofire. A

million connections had to be severed and be re-established. Each engine module contained four separate functional engines, to be used at different speeds relative to the background of space. While working on the platform, we were warned not to peer over the edge of it. The shielding effect of the nose cone extended no more than a foot beyond the periphery of the ship. Anyone who would extend his hand or head beyond this zone of protection would come into contact with the energy background of space that would tear apart the atomic structures of his body moving at near light speed velocity. That's why the ship couldn't be turned around to have its engines face forward as slow moving space ships decelerate.

When the huge work was complete, including that of preparing the ship for gravity change, the time had come to implement the deceleration process. This meant that once again everyone was taking the elevator to level zero, to the great auditorium. At level zero, however, nobody walks anymore, everyone floats. We sort of floated out of the elevator, bumped into each other or against the ceiling. The trick was to come close to an empty seat and take hold of it. They could have issued us magnetic shoes, except this way, it was more fun.

Strapped into our seats, we spend the next half-hour watching a movie. After that the captain made a speech on the historic importance of the occasion. Half an hour into his speech I felt the retro-engines ignite and building up power for retarding the ship. That's when Bohr showed up. He suddenly appeared on the stage. He obviously had searched the galaxies, or at least the costume archives of Hollywood, for suitable attire. He wore a glittering golden suit of the kind Alvis Presley might have once worn at the height of his concert career.

Bohr's timing certainly was excellent. Only on rare occasions as this was the entire crew brought together into one place. He got everyone's attention without fail. Before the captain apparently realized what happened, Bohr was addressing the assembly. He addressed the people right in the middle of the captain's speech, informing them about the insanity of the intended landing.

"There isn't anything there to see, except a remnant of a civilization that has failed itself. Sure you have seen clean cities, spacious, uncrowded. I say, what you saw were ghost towns created by millions of deaths. You saw the end-result of a dying civilization. Can you expect to learn anything new from those who have failed themselves? The Earth is awash with examples of this sort. Just look at its present civilization. The economies are driven by greed, moving constantly towards greater and greater accumulations of wealth. The paradox is that the very people, on whose backs this wealth was gauged out of the living of humanity, admire the wealthy as though they were heroes. They admire them for their skills in stealing the lifeblood out of them. While people generally abhor violations of human rights, they tend to condone them in their own midst. Even slavery, over which wars have been fought to put an end to it, is all but gone. The problem is that people do willingly enslave themselves to the most relentless masters. All this they call human nature. By listening to a mentality they mistakenly regard as their own inner voice, which they have not yet discovered, they condemn themselves. The people at Gamma .8 have gone the same route. The only difference is that they have succumbed to their illusions and stopped defending themselves. They have stopped to stand up for their rights. What you will see is a 'neutron star' of pure mental hell, a concentrated fascism that contains all the fundamental mistakes left unresolved over the

centuries. And you want to learn from them?"

Bohr suggested that if we were lucky enough not to be killed we stood an excellent chance to be hypnotized by this mentality, and so suffer a tragic net loss while we wanted to gain in insight.

Instead of landing at Gamma .8, Bohr suggested that he would take them, together with the ship, to a highly advanced civilization, a civilization that has not collapsed itself. He spoke of planet 'O,' known to us, as planet Odessa, which he said, was a worthy match for the best humanity had brought forth that was embodied in this ship. He assured us that the intelligence behind the ship's technology represents a giant step by humanity beyond material limits. He called it a fitting stepping stone towards a more worthy goal, that of exploring the world of planet 'O' where people had moved beyond the threshold of those mental limits that now threaten to shut down humanity. He admitted that he himself was still in many ways caught in the web of these self-imposed mental snares in which humanity has entangled itself, but....

Bohr was cut off. The captain intervened.

"I have, at this moment, activated the final automatic sequence for retro power," said the captain. "This sequence will take us right through to the final orbit insertion at Gamma .8 without a possible manual override. The sequence is too complex for anyone to tinker with. And in respect to the insanity you have just been exposed to," he began to laugh. "Really! That is no longer worth wasting any breath over, in discussing it. Am I not right?"

His face became hard once his thin laughter had died down. He raised his hand as though he swore. "Anything that does not constructively add to our goal of landing at Gamma .8 must be regarded as academic treason from this point on, and must be met with appropriate measures."

Bohr stood aghast. With his mouth still open from his last words he shrugged his shoulders and vanished. At this instant the giant screen of the auditorium came alive with a laser projected simulation of what happened to the ship. Magnetic flow engines located on the periphery of the ship slowed its rotational movement. At the same time the main engines were turned on and held at .001G, trimmed to precise balance. This sequence repeated itself until it was held at .300G. Then a computer generated cartoon showed us how the agro plant was automatically converted; how its flats of plants were rotated ninety degrees at a special adjustment station, together with their associated light panels.

I recalled the last gravity change process. No information had been given then. We had simply been sent to the auditorium where a long movie had been playing.

It felt good to know what was going on. The agro plant conversion process was to take two hours as we were told by one of the officers of the ship, after which the gravity change would continue.

Since we had three tens of normal gravity by then, we were invited to unbuckle and move around. The officer even announced that the dance floor was open, one floor below the auditorium.

Few people seemed eager to dance, however. I certainly didn't feel like dancing after the way Bohr was rebuffed. I went down stairs, though, with Natalia. To my greatest surprise, I noticed Bohr on the dance floor, having a great time with Jill. He had shed his glistening Gold

suit, for some tight black jeans and a black and silver striped shirt.

I asked Natalia for a dance.

"Not now," she said quietly.

"What about me?" I heard a voice from behind me. It was Odessa.

I bowed, and off we were as floating through space. Dancing at three tens of normal gravity is indeed a lot of fun. We bumped into Bohr more than once.

"I haven't seen you so alive, not in years," she said to Alex when Jill had become exhausted and we had all retired to a sitting area built into the wall.

"The same goes for you, 'O,'" Alex replied and began to grin. "You haven't called me Alex for years."

"I'm surprised at you too," I said to Bohr, after I gained my breath again. "Why have you given up so easily, in the auditorium?"

"Given up! Who has given up? Not I! I never give up," he grinned. "It just isn't the right moment to push further. What humanity is there in pushing them into a violent conflict with the captain, over something they don't yet understand? Men like the captain are dangerous. You'd be surprised to find out what they are capable off."

"Besides, Alex has said enough," added 'O.' "The ship is full of intelligent people. To force feed them would be an insult to their dignity."

"Whenever I'm at this ship," said Alex, "I realize that the intelligence that went into the building of it, is still around. How then, can I loose hope?" His face became serious though. Neither smile nor laughter seemed possible. "Many of the people might die, because of the captain!" he said and closed his eyes. "They may support the captain on this mission as far as he demands, but they can't escape the consequences of the insanity of their actions."

When supper was called, the dining room on the next level below us was set up as for a festive occasion, with white table cloths and a genuine red rose on every table.

"Gosh! Where did the captain get those from?" marveled Jill, then turned and looked at Alex, who began to smile again. "From your planet?"

Alex, as we now called him, shook his head. "From the planet 'O'," he corrected her in a soft whisper.

"I'd love to gather bundles of flowers again," said Jill.

"Oh you will," Alex replied, "but not on Gamma planet. You won't be able to pick flowers until you pick them on the planet 'O'."

Alex, Martin, and 'O' disappeared that night. They vanished as they usually did. They exited near the end of another dance session that went on for many hours past midnight. I wondered if they were aware of the immense amount of work that needed to be done.

Every room aboard ship had to be rebuilt. What used to be the floor, now became a wall. The ceiling, too, had to be moved. Elevator shafts had to be converted to hallways, and hallways to elevator shafts. Even the Atrium was constructed in a modular fashion. Stairs, walkways, the dome, everything could be taken apart and re-assembled as the new gravity orientation required. There were plug-ins for everything, everywhere. Everything was color-coded. The light pipe connectors for the ceiling panels, for instance, were blue. There were connectors for computer access, air conditioning, power, intercom, alarm systems, light

switches.

The doors throughout the ship were as wide as they were high for that purpose, with panels closing from all four corners. The doors looked the same no matter how the rooms were arranged around them according to the three different directions in which the ship's artificial gravity would act upon us. Most of the rebuilding was done at three tenths of normal gravity.

The physical rebuilding of the ship, and the even larger task of a language training effort that would enable us to speak the Gamma language well enough to partake in parliamentary discussions, left us nearly breathless until one day, orbit insertion had been achieved. So, once more the engines were stopped, the ship began to roll on its axis, and every room had to be rebuilt again.

This time, Alex didn't show up for the gathering in the great auditorium during gravity change. The huge movie screen was filled with close ups of Gamma .8 with views of its three moons and two sister suns that were brighter than its own red sun. This show was equally as exiting, if not more so than the first one.

Later on, selected TV broadcasts were relayed to the screen, to monitor if the ship had been sighted. Which it hadn't.

Eventually, the captain announced the names of the first landing team. He himself would be the leader of it. My name, and that of Jill, Natalia, and Mark, was among twenty-five other names. Mark was a friend of Jill.

It struck me as odd that our entire group was called out. I didn't expect the honor to be chosen for the first mission. It quickly dawned on me that this wasn't an honor. Every troupe needs some elements that are expendable when a situation gets hot, someone to hold the line so that the rest might escape. This was to be us!

According to measurements it was summer on the planet. We were provided with the appropriate clothing, a bicycle for transportation, but no weapons, except for a knife. We also were supplied with a communicator each that could reach the ship, and four video cameras for the troupe as a whole. Each person was provisioned with enough food for five days. Everyone carried his own. Camping equipment was distributed to groups of four persons according to our own choosing. Naturally, our group stayed together, especially after having realized what our presence with this troupe might signify.

I felt a strange apprehension when the shuttle doors closed behind us and the exit bay opened. Slowly, almost imperceptible at first, the shuttle was propelled out of the ship towards the planet, controlled by small thrusters. Most of the time we floated silently. An occasional burst of retro fire slowed us to the required rate of descend. The planet soon lay below us like a vast gray and blue carpet. The ship itself could no longer be seen. A strange New World lay before us. The majestic Strauss Waltz came to mind from the old movie, 2001 - A Space Odyssey.

We landed as planned, on a high plateau at the foot of a glacier. The landing craft would not be noticed there. Also the solid rock at this site would allow us to land unnoticed, as our landing jets wouldn't whirl clouds of dust into the air.

To the right was a meadow that sloped upward to an ice covered mountain that towered thousands of feet above us. To the left, a gorge dropped off that opened into a side valley. The

survey photos had shown an animal trail along the ledge, which would become our path.

We left the shuttle, pushing our bikes in single file, our luggage strapped on tight. We were like a strange company of Western tourists in an alien Himalayan setting.

The trail soon entered a virgin forest of Juniper like trees. At times we could ride the bikes, so smooth was the trail in the forest. But where were the animals?

At a crossing behind a waterfall the secret of the trail began to unravel. This wasn't an animal trail. A log extended over a gorge, but its top was flattened with some primitive tool. We could see the chop marks.

The entire journey, of course, was video transmitted to the ship. Chop marks and all.

Eventually we came to a clearing, with a lake that had a temple like structure on its opposite shore. The trail ended at the lake.

It took nearly two hours to get everyone ferried across in the only inflatable raft we had with us. The temple was made of marble, consisting of four pillars with a dome-like roof. Grass grew where the stones were joined. The place appeared to have been deserted. We stopped for a picnicking. Some went for a swim. The lake must have been fed by a hot spring. Its water was warm and clear, with a slight smell of sulfur.

The rest of the trail passed through what looked like a bamboo forest. Near the end the trail became largely obliterated with leaves which worried the captain, but caused us no problem except to slow our progress. Nevertheless, by nightfall we had reached our destination, the edge of a meadow that rose up from the main valley. Oh, what a joy! We were embracing each other for the sheer excitement of the moment. Gone were our fears and reservations. We could see the village through the binoculars, a quaint farming village at the end of a narrow dirt road. Another dirt road extended from the village into the valley. Strangely, though, not a soul could be seen, on the road, or in the fields beyond the meadow.

We set up camp. Soon the orange glow of Beta Sun dominated the sky like the harvest moon does on clear autumn days, only warmer and brighter. The climate certainly was lovely.

We broke camp at dawn. The early sunshine glistened on the dew of the meadow as we pushed our bikes through a sea of tall grasses towards the road. A few animals could be seen grassing near the village.

At last, when we reached the road we were able to use our bicycles again. The lead bike, ridden by the captain of course, had a video camera mounted on its handlebars. I felt both, exited and tense now. We had no idea what we were getting into, and Martin's warning was coming to mind briefly. Still, those were soon pushed into the background again.

We entered the village in tight formation like a group of tourists might be expected to. The dirt road took us to an open space inside the village. It encircled the village pond that took up most of the space. There were houses on all sides of the open space, with wooden fences in from of them. Still, the place was as empty as if it were a ghost town. Of course the day had just begun.

The first to discover us, were the children. Except, they were too shy to come near us.

"The men from the city are here!" they shouted in front of a prominent place at the edge of the village, near another lake among the fields.

A darkly dressed figure came out, walking towards us, with the children all around, pointing in our direction.

"Go and find Reuel," the figure commanded in a voice that carried well in the morning stillness. The figure was that of a man, an old man. He introduced himself as Mahesh and bid us welcome.

"We are not from the city," Jill explained. She pointed towards the meadow.

"Then you're from the coast, from Virtus," he said.

We didn't answer. Reuel came towards us, again surrounded by the children.

"These people have come from Virtus to honor our village with their presence at the festival," Mahesh introduced us. His hair blew loosely in the morning wind.

Reuel blushed.

"Our village chief is honored," Mahesh explained. "There are few festivals left, and fewer people who know about them."

The captain and most of our company went with Reuel, a tall blond man with baby eyes. The two appeared to be one of a kind.

Mahesh invited Jill and me, and Mark into his house. As we went in, we noticed Reuel in the distance trying to ride the captain's bike.

"We are not from Virtus," Jill explained to Mahesh inside the house. "I am from Thailand, a country far away on a planet of a different solar system."

"No, you are from Virtus!" He blinked his eyes when he said this.

Jill nodded.

"Anything is possible in Virtus," Mahesh said in a flat sounding dialect of Gamma language. "Do you understand what I mean? You must never, under any circumstance deviate from insisting that you have come from Virtus! Regardless of who may ask you," he added. "Always insist that you are from Virtus!" He took Jill's hand.

She said she understood and hugged him. We all did.

By then I noticed that his wife and daughter had entered the main room, which was on the ground floor next to the one we were on, which appeared like a farmer's kitchen of ages past.

He called and introduced them: "This is Cira," he said in a soft tone. "She was married once, to a village chief. Then he pointed to his wife and said merely, Alenaah," in a slow and drawn out speech. He took a deep breath and turned to me with some apprehension: "How far is your planet?"

I was lost for a term of reference that he could understand. Finally I held my hand out somewhere four feet of the ground.

"As far as it takes a child to grow up to here."

He nodded and sighed. "We have been forced to live here for this long." He showed me his hands, scarred with deep cuts. He explained that he was a musician once and a nuclear engineer before.... His hands started to shake. I calmed him. Jill assured him that we understood.

Jill was a dream to be with, on this planet. I had never known anyone as sensitive to things as she was, especially to those little things that I had so often conveniently overlooked as insignificant. The old house was a gold mine to her; an open door to a culture that she felt had something rich in it. It wasn't the primitiveness that she liked, but the little art objects that Alenaah and Mahesh were only too glad to show her, and explain their origin.

After supper Cira showed me a room on the upper floor, where I could stay overnight. It

would be an honor if I did, and more so if she could stay with me.

Odessa on Bohr's planet came to my thought. If I could reach the same state of mind again.... The thought was suppressed.

I agreed that Cira could remain with me. Why shouldn't she? The room was obviously her own. I looked at Cira and felt that the threshold could be crossed to where closeness is no longer a valid concept in one's experience. Feeling close is related to distance. Yes, even feeling close is nothing more than a myth in the universe where distance is no longer a reality. I tried to explain in as simple terms as I could, how the Bohr/Miller effect works, which I hardly understood myself. She began to undress herself by the window against the orange glow of the Beta Sun. The oneness that I felt with her, a feeling that reflected the superabundance of being in which clothing had no significance, must have made her stop. We didn't speak to each other. Speech was too crude. Only now and then, a few questions were asked. How many children she had, and why she hadn't re-married.

She said that she could have had three children as wife of a village chief. But they never had any. There were always some reasons why he didn't want to. Then he died. Now she couldn't have children, she said. People on Latush, as she called her planet or country, were allowed to marry only once. She could marry only someone who had lost his wife, and have children only if he had none in his previous marriage. Any unauthorized children would be taken away by the state, to be raised as laborers, to become feed stock for labor camps. This was intended to keep population figures under control. She could never live through a thing like that, so she said there was no more thought about marriage entertained.

I hugged her for the longest time. I couldn't think of a time when I felt more sorry for anyone. But soon I could only feel her presence again, and intelligence that reached far beyond this miasma of misery.

Suddenly, a flash of fear entered my mind, for Natalia. I had seen her walking off with the captain, in conversation with a young man who had accompanied the village chief Reuel. In this repressive environment there would exist immense pressures for sexual adventures, especially if the village chief condoned this who might have been the man's friend. As some sort of imaginary purity was the captain's ideal of morality, so masculine dominance might be the highest ideal of morality in this fascist-based state culture.

Before I could question Cira, I heard Natalia scream murder outside.

I rushed down stairs. She burst through the door, totally out of breath, and began to block the door from within.

"They have killed the captain, we must get out of here!" she cried.

"Why!"

"They know we're not from Virtus. We are spies to them."

I told her to run upstairs where all the others were, and followed her. I knew the upstairs door could also be locked.

I heard them break down the door below and enter, like animals. The night was their time.

While Cira woke her parents, and Natalia shouted at Jill and Mark in the room next to ours, I heard Cira yelling something about yrock, yrock, -- the word for straw.

Those animals never even tried to break the upstairs door. They were going to burn us alive. The grounds around the house were swarming with these people. I turned the camera

on for one last time and propped it up on the windowsill.

"The ship can't do a thing for us," shouted Natalia as she saw me.

"No, Natalia, but I can. And you must help me."

I called everyone together. "We must embrace each other. Natalia, Jill, you must help me with the Bohr/Miller effect!"

We aimed for the control center. No one there was more surprised than I was that we made it. And did things get moving after that! After a second had elapsed there was no doubt in anyone's mind who was in charge of the ship. It was Natalia. For the first time in my life I realized that there was some justice in giving female names to hurricanes.

"The whole damn lousy mission is dead! Bring the shuttle back up," she shouted at the first officer who tried to hide behind standing orders. "The captain is dead! Everyone has been killed! No one survived, but us."

Slowly the officer gave in to her and brought the empty shuttle back to the ship. The video from Mahesh's place amply supported our story. The seven of us watched the video monitor in utter disbelief, wondering how in heavens we had made it out of this hell. We watched the screen until the camera was consumed by the flames and stopped sending pictures.

Once the transmission had stopped, Natalia ordered the ship to be placed into a higher orbit. Mahesh, Cira, and Alenaah were put up at the captain's quarters. There was little space on the ship while the reconstruction after gravity change was still in progress.

Natalia and Jill and I took turns at the bridge.

A full crew conference was set up for the next day, and an alert was issued that we were to be notified whenever the space travelers re-appeared who had previously visited the ship.

Bohr appeared promptly the next morning. Actually, I should call him Alex from here on, according to his real name. He appeared with precise timing just as breakfast was being served. He wasn't shocked at the captain's demise, nor at the death of the others.

"It was their choice to follow this path," he replied when I pressed him for a statement. He said that he had explained what would happen.

He didn't have to say more than this. Everyone had been at the conference in the great auditorium during gravity change. Everyone knew what he had said.

I respected Alex for not mentioning the captain's fault for the tragedy, not even that he had warned us. I took this as a sign of compassion, even though normally, he wouldn't bother wasting any breath over what he knew we would be aware of. It also might have been, as he once told me, that the concept of a future or a past held no validity with him. It was no longer a part of his experience, but a measure that pertained to a universe of matter that he had withdrawn himself from. He did, though, speak at great length of the prospects of our exploring with him the secrets of the planet 'O'.

The ship would be put in orbit over planet 'O' and become base of operations, while his home planet could be used as a logistical base, and a base for resting and learning the language that was spoken on 'O'. There could be a daily shuttle service between the two planets, and of course an hourly shuttle between the orbiter and the planet surface of 'O'. There could be a constant interchange with the people from 'O' and those from the ship, where he himself would become one of us.

He spoke a fascinating language, like a science fiction writer whose story fires on the imagination. Only once in a while we got jolted back to the incomprehensible awareness that this was real.

At one point a mathematics genius asked how he intended to get us across three galaxy clusters in the space of a lifetime, and back to earth.

I still remember his smile. Alex just sat there and smiled. "Go to the planetarium," he suggested. "You will discover that we are already there."

The only explanation as to how this was possible, that he was able to give, was based on revealing the secret behind the nose cone of the ship that had allowed them to make their journey to Alpha Centauri in the first place.

"Now Bohr would have his chance!" I said to myself.

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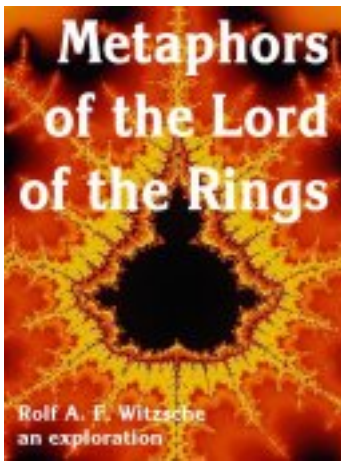
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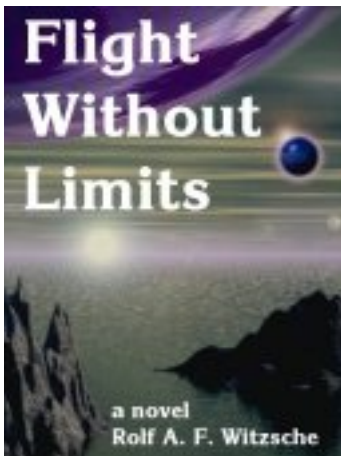
Political exploration



The Lord of the Rings' Metaphors

It is a rare thing in literature that one finds a tale written a long time ago that is reflected in the present to such an extent, that it seems the writer had created a script for the future and the future has obeyed. Such a thing can be said about the story of J.R.R. Tolkien's mythical tale, The Lord of the Rings.

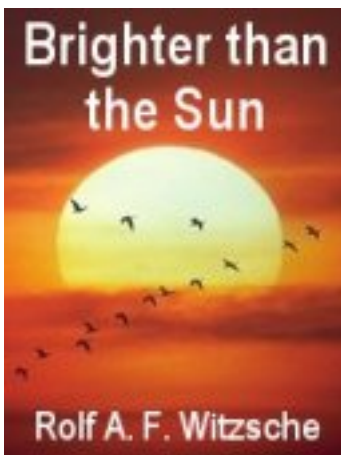
Novels



Flight Without Limits

(science fiction)

The novel is a science fiction work with a touch of reality. It is about a space voyage to Alpha Centauri, the nearest solar system to our own. But in metaphor, the novel is really about being able to move mentally without limits. Physically we may never be able to overcome all limits, but what would hinder us to break all limits mentally?



Brighter than the Sun

(playing with nuclear matches)

This novel has two opposite centers. One reflects the tragic domain of our nuclear armed world, and the second the domain of spiritual freedom where old axioms become discredited and fall away while love unfolds its universal face. Will the latter prevail?

The Lodging for the Rose a series of nine novels



* Episode 1 - [Discovering Love](#)

Here begins an epic story that spans eight novels. The subject is freedom powered by universal love, the largely unexplored 'country.' Few people have dared to cross its borders and travel its landscape.



* Episode 2A - [The Ice Age Challenge](#)

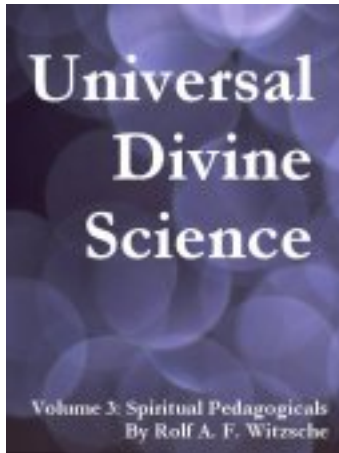
"The Ice Age Challenge" refers to the challenge that we face to create a new foundation for living when the coming Ice Age climate shuts down most of the world's agriculture. The resumption of the Ice Age could happen possibly 100 to 150 years from now. It may take that long to build the vast facilities that will be needed to feed the world from indoor agriculture. But is our love big enough that we can achieve the physically near impossible in order to assure a future for mankind beyond the space of our time? What limits would we put on the dimension of universal love? It appears we are in a triple race to meet all of these challenges. The big question is, do we have the skills to stay the course?



* Episode 2B - [Roses at Dawn in an Ice Age World](#)

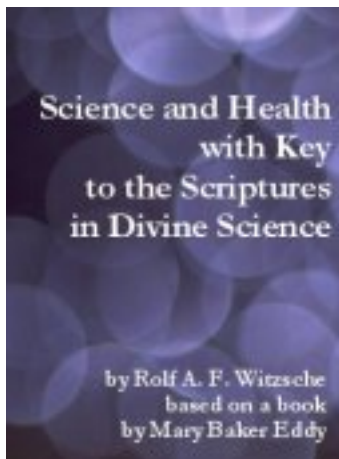
With the Ice Age resuming 100 to 150 years from now we are challenged to embrace the still rejected renaissance principle, the Principle of Universal Love, without which mankind may not survive. But will we be able to upgrade our human dimension sufficiently to accept the Principle of Universal Love and to reflect it in our daily living? God is Love, universal divine Principle. Do we dare to love universally in the social domain? Or do we pretend that the divine Principle of Universal Love doesn't apply there, especially when it comes to our personal loved ones and friends?

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