

THE CANADIAN THEOSOPHIST

Divine Wisdom

Brotherhood

Occult Science

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A NEW YEAR, A NEW CYCLE

"And let no one imagine that it is a mere fancy, the attaching of importance to the birth of the year. The earth passes through its definite phases and man with it; and as a day can be coloured so can a year. The astral light of the earth is young and strong between Christmas and Easter. Those who form their wishes now will have added strength to fulfill them consistently."—H. P. BLAVATSKY, *Lucifer*,

Jan. 15, 1888.

No one, save perhaps a seer or a sage, can predict what the cycle of this coming year has in store for humanity. It may be a cycle in which we will be required to face experiences so new and strange that all our resources of fortitude and endurance will be required if we are to undergo them without breaking under the strain. In saying this we are not thinking only of the threat of war waged by atomic bombs, those new and terrible weapons which mankind has fletched for the quiver of Mars. Such a war is possible—in this little cycle of the coming year vast areas of the northern hemisphere may be laid waste and rendered uninhabitable. Millions may die and great cities, so solid, so permanent, so well organized against the ordinary hazards of tempest, fire

and drought may become lifeless ruins. Our little cares for our homes, loved ones, gardens, our anxieties over taxes, debts, insurance and all the other little concerns of our lives which arise out of our relationship to others and to the community and nation, all these may vanish overnight—we may not be here to worry over them. Atomic bombs are no respecters of persons and no matter how important our little life and its concerns may be to us, a bomb may have the impertinence to disregard this, and wipe us out. But while the possibility of such a war exists, we do not think it is inevitable or even a likelihood in this particular cycle.

To those whose philosophy includes the concept of ever-enduring Life circling throughout Eternity in its greater or lesser cycles, death, as one of the processes of life, can be faced with calmness and serenity. There are many worse things than death. To live deprived of will, independence, compassion and of that innate intangible called 'human dignity', to descend while still wearing a human form to a status lower than the animals, is more terrible to contemplate than death itself. Today we are aware of the lower state to which a man may be driven by torture, depriv-

ation, degradation and by the subtleties of psychological practices misapplied for the purpose of perversion. When we read of some example of this, we are revolted and regard it as something horribly indecent and unspeakably degrading, an offense not against the individual only, but as a sin against the human race. Some of the accounts we read may have been written for propaganda purposes—and those who profess to follow truth know that propaganda is not written with 'truth' alone in mind, and need not for its own purpose contain a modicum of truth. Nevertheless in impartial accounts of prisons and concentration camps there is evidence that carefully planned and ruthlessly executed assaults against man's sacred shrine of innate dignity, against that inner quality which makes of him a man and not a beast, form part of a new science of subjection.

When we read of it as a happening in Europe or Asia, we can view it objectively participating in it to the degree of our compassion. One of the growing dangers in our modern life is the possibility of a subjective acceptance of other forms of assault on that inner shrine without our being aware of what is happening. We may observe it and merely pass it by as being part of 'modern living', 'different times, different habits' nevertheless we cannot help being affected by the unending assault against manliness and human dignity and which threatens that precarious foothold which mankind has established on the mountainside of evolution. Our newspapers, magazines and movies contribute to it—one can understand why the Soviet propaganda machine has no difficulty in giving convincing, graphic proof of the insanity and depravity of life under 'capitalism' by assembling shorts from our newsreels and photographs from some of our modern 'pics'. Murder, rape, sexual indecencies, adult

and juvenile delinquencies—plus the inevitable comics—are standard repasts prepared for our intellectual consumption. The constant appearance of such items excites and stimulates the lower mind and with such stimulation the finer intuitions are blocked until coarseness, ill-breeding and misbehaviour come to be accepted as normal to our way of life. The recent issue of *Life* which carried colour reproductions of Michelangelo's masterpiece, the paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, also carried photograph of some of the girls from the chorus of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.—the girls wearing only a bunch of grapes and two halves of wine glasses to support their breasts. We hope we are not a prude but to us the costumes were just vulgar and their juxtaposition to the exquisite and masterly beauty of the Sistine paintings, was in the worst possible taste.

The unthinking acceptance of a growing coarseness in attitude is one of the problems of this cycle—possibly largely an individual one for one does not have to read indecent literature nor study vulgar photographs—perhaps our sage would look through the *Life* issue and not be interested enough in chorus girls to notice what they were wearing. There is always one's own self-responsibility for one's interests and reactions, and there are always persons who are superior to various assaults against their finer natures.

Which finally brings us to one of the ideas with which this article was started, namely, that in this cycle there is a process of separation going on in humanity, a drawing apart into upper and lower polarities. Such a process is doubtlessly always present but it seems to be made all the more intense by the quantity and peculiar quality of the pressures of modern times. The stimulation and expansion of thought which occurred in the closing years of the last

century and the injection of unfamiliar ideas into world thought, has produced and will go on producing, new and unfamiliar ways of life. The physical marvels of this age will be surpassed by those of the next few years. Humanity has produced marvels—the magic of telephone, teletype, television, airpower, the various applications of electrical and nuclear energy—but has not advanced ethically to the point where it can use them without the danger of being debased by its own creations. This is a commonplace observation but its triteness does not invalidate its truth. Our 'push-button' humanity is now exercising control over physical forces, controls which were made possible through the activities of a few men who devoted their lives to acquiring the special knowledge necessary to their creation. The millions who use these facilities did not share in the creation and do not share in the knowledge of how and why they work. We have become dependent upon such facilities in our ordinary lives, but we live dissociated from a knowledge of the very means by which we do live in modern civilization. One hundred years ago it might have been possible for a man to know within himself most of the 'knowable' knowledge of his age. Today no one individual can—knowledge is highly specialized and is becoming ever more so. The psychological effect of this dissociation may be more profound than we are aware of.

Mankind cannot voluntarily return to the technical simplicity of former days. Our creations have seized upon us; we are in the complexities of this era and the whirling wheel of scientific advances will bring more and more complexities. Individuals, however, will attain simplicity, not necessarily by forsaking the complexities of the age, but by the ancient path of finding that inclusive simplicity of their own soul,

which while embracing variety, ever stands unattached and unsoiled by it.

In the world today there are integrative forces as well as disintegrative ones—particularly the integrative force of Theosophical doctrines, whose publication in the west preceded that sudden expansion of thought in the past century. Individuals who recognized the validity of these doctrines found release from superstition and from religious thralldom. Independence of mind and self reliance were encouraged. Mankind received once again the ageless vision of a universe of wholeness, and of the individual's participation in that wholeness. The ancient doctrine of the essential unity of the Universal Self and the Self of man once more flashed like a meteor in the skies of man's aspirations, bringing peace and certainty and awakening compassion for all men in the hearts of those who saw the vision. In the doctrines of reincarnation, karma and the Path, men found the essentials upon which to formulate an inner attitude towards life's experiences, an attitude in which all experiences were accepted, but each item was valued for its noumenal content after the emotional and merely obvious had been stripped away.

Theosophy, however, did not escape the vulgarizing effect of the age. Little minds seized upon its sacred truths and sold them in the market places. Lesser teachings replaced ancient and more austere doctrines, travesties and hollow shells of the original. Nor did Theosophy escape from the effects of a dissociation similar to that mentioned above. The original teachings carried internal evidence of being the work of specialists—inclusive specialists, it must be added—and of being part only of a vaster, integrated system of thought, the accumulated result of thousands of years of research into the nature of

the Universe and of Man and the relationship between them. Students were warned not to accept them on faith but examine with reason and intuition, slowly piecing together one fragment after another. Each student must formulate his own Theosophy; his road to masterhood in the science proceeds by selfinduced and selfinitiated efforts towards the goal before him.

This is the way of sanity and may be followed without peril, save from those hazards which are inherent in following every self directed course. It encourages the growth of individuality and fosters co-operation of groups of students of dissimilar temperaments, in which groups the contribution of each temperament is duly appreciated and valued.

Blind acceptance of theosophical teachings is dangerous and such an offense against mind and heart can lead to serious disturbances of a psychopathic nature. "Occult pronouncements" by whomsoever made have no validity for an individual beyond their appeal to his or her reason and intuition. Any attempt at compulsion of belief, either by the bribe of pleasing the Master or by the threat of displeasure

is contrary to the whole spirit of the Movement.

Theosophically we are entering a new cycle, the last twenty-five years of the first one hundred years of the Society's existence. In this important cycle, the process of separation between those who strive to keep the old essentials ever before them, and those who would rush on in haste along the path of lower psychism may become more pronounced—not because of any desire to separate, but because the pull of the two polarities may become more pronounced. H. P. B. foresaw the rise of psychism in the western world and warned us of its dangers and disintegrative influences.

The new cycle has been born and at its beginning we will not only say "A Happy New Year" to all our readers—we are not quite sure what 'happy' means; it is our earnest wish, not of today only but constantly, that every student of Theosophy will find within his or her own heart that source of courage, sincerity, compasion, insight and wisdom which will lead us in quiet confidence through all the varied experiences which karma may bring to us in Life's greater and lesser cycles.

D. W. B.

The Past! What is it? Nothing. Gone! Dismiss it. You are the past of yourself. Therefore it concerns you not as such. It only concerns you as you now are. In you as now you exist, lies *all* the past. So follow the Hindu maxim: "Regret nothing; never be sorry; and cut all doubts with the sword of spiritual knowledge." Regret is productive only of error. I care not what I *was*, or what anyone *was*. I only look for what I am each moment. For as each moment is and at once is not, it must follow that if we think of the past we forget the present, and while we forget, the moments fly by us, making more past. Then regret nothing, not even the greatest follies of your life, for they are gone, and you are to work in the present which is both past and future at once.—*W.Q.J.*

"AT PEACE WITH MY NEIGHBOUR'S TRUTH"

BY DR. E. L. ALLEN

That the angles of an equilateral triangle are all equal, that Washington (D.C.) is the capital of U.S.A., that Julius Caesar conquered Gaul: these are truths which belong in the realm of *common knowledge*. We may not have verified any one of them for ourselves, yet we do not hesitate to accept them. They are so detached from what affects us personally that we are prepared to take them on authority and we do not see anything in them which would induce those on whose authority we take them to cook their facts. The proposition that Hitler committed suicide before Berlin fell is, so far as we know, beyond any possibility of verification. Yet we can conceive of its being verified; there is nothing about it which, in principle, would place it outside what I have called the realm of common knowledge.

On the other hand, there is the truth which consists in *personal conviction*. This is so bound up with my whole being that to surrender it would involve a repudiation of my very self. It is not one of many truths which I possess, it is *the* truth and it possessses me. In the language of Kierkegaard, it is "the truth which is truth for me, the idea for which I must live and die". I can only exchange this truth for another as I undergo a painful process of conversion: what happens then is not that the circumference of my life is drawn a little farther out, so as to take in a fresh piece of information, but that its centre is fixed at a new point. Till that happens, the fact that other people do not share my truth must not be allowed to shake its hold upon me; I remind myself how often the solitary conviction of one man has become

in course of time the acknowledged creed of a whole community.

But it is not often the case that the truth by which a man lives is such a solitary conviction. It is usually part of the tradition, the faith, the way of life, of the group to which he belongs. Our society is terribly sectionalized, split up into little societies, each of which has its own standards of conduct, its own list of heroes, and its own literature. That is why what is so obvious to President Truman is so preposterous to Marshal Stalin; they clash as individuals because their nations set out from such diverse assumptions. They agree in the truths of common knowledge but live out of different convictions. So the man who reads *THE INQUIRER* does not normally read the *Universe* as well. If he did, it would seem unintelligible to him. As he puts it, there is no common ground.

Here then is the problem with which we are faced. What is the relation between the truth which grips me but leaves another cold and the truth which grips that other but leaves me cold? In my moments of faith, my truth is infinitely precious to me, so that life would be inconceivable without it. But in my moment of doubt—and they come to us all—I reflect that my truth is only one out of a number of opinions which people have held in the course of history. The one truth has pitted against it the many truths, and at times is even in danger of being reduced to their level. This is no merely theoretical problem. Wars of religion in the past and ideological struggles in the present remind us that civilization itself may perish unless my truth can find some way of living at peace with my neighbour's truth.

The first and oldest solution of this problem is that of *fanaticism*. I claim that my truth is the only truth in the world and that all the rest are error. In that case, my duty is simple: I must persuade everyone else to abandon his truth and come over to mine. Since it soon becomes clear that very few of them are disposed to do this, I am confirmed in my belief that they are in the grip of error. That being so, I either abandon them to their fate, with or without regret, or I employ coercion to bring them over to my point of view. Which of these attitudes one takes up will no doubt depend, in the main, on the power which one possesses. But no one can seriously advocate such a policy except on the assumption that others will not also follow it. If they do, society is turned into a war of all against all.

The second solution is the modern one of *relativism*. I allow my truth to sink to the level at which it becomes just one opinion among many. I examine it as thus wholly detached from myself and decide that it has no more right to exist than any other. One man's opinion, I say, is as likely to be right as another's; I think as I do because I was born in this country and trained in this way, the other man because his background is different from my own. The result is not tolerance, but the discovery that there is really nothing over which anyone need feel at all deeply. If such a position were generally adopted, the result would be a static society. Without the effort of one man to persuade another, progress would cease and stagnation would set in. Nor does anyone really suppose that as between science and magic, democracy and tyranny, there is nothing to choose.

The third solution is that of *communication*. That is to say, because my truth is vital to me, part of my very self, I claim the right to set it before my fellow and to seek to win him for it. At the

same time, because I gladly recognize that his truth is vital to him, part of his very self, I urge him to set it before me and am willing to learn from him. So, through the open interchange and frank discussion of what is precious to each of us, we shall hope to be able to arrive in the end at a *common truth*, a shared conviction and not merely a shared item of knowledge. That common truth is the goal which we seek in all our intercourse, and it can only be won as neither of us imposes himself on the other and as neither of us conceals, out of a spurious humility, the truth which has won him.

It was the faith of the last century that free and frank discussion of honestly-held convictions would lead in the end to agreement. To be sure, there was something naive about that faith. It assumed conditions of honesty which do not often obtain in this world. An individual or an institution may stand to lose so heavily by the publication of the truth that it only allows a faked version to become known, and the process of discussion is vitiated from the outset. It assumed also an equality between the parties by such discussion which may not obtain in real life. When one of them is the State with all the apparatus of propaganda at its disposal, what chance has the individual against it? Nowadays, too, the tempo of political life is such that the temptation to manufacture public opinion instead of waiting for it to take shape freely may become almost irresistible.

All these considerations, however, do not invalidate the liberal faith in free discussion, they only show how difficult it is to obtain the conditions under which such discussion will yield a common truth. But what is the alternative? Can we continue indefinitely without a common truth? And is not such a shared conviction, in the very nature of the case, something which can only be

reached by persuasion and consent? To reach it, I am not merely permitted to stand for the truth as I see it. I am under an obligation to do so, since otherwise society would lose my contribution. But I recognize that every other person is under the same obligation. I welcome the clash of mind against mind for the sake of that agreement between mind and mind which is the end in view.

This demands of us all, as Robert Birley put it so well in his first Reith Lecture, "a very difficult kind of humility, the readiness to accept the fact that one may be wrong, while still trying to persuade other people that one is right".

The faith of the nineteenth century was too simple at another point. It imagined that the common truth at which we should arrive by the frank encounter of conviction with conviction was a set of agreed propositions. This was, of course, the mistake, so easy at that period, of confusing the truth which is personal with the truth which is matter of common knowledge. The result of that enterprise of communication described above may sometimes be an agreed proposition. But often it will not be that. It will be a deeper understanding of each other's position, an increase in mutual respect, a resolve to continue the combat without trace of personal enmity, a spirit of fellowship which makes co-operation possible even between those who set out from different points, and so on. The common truth may lie beyond any verbal formulation, in a spiritual attitude compounded of the resolute will and the open mind. (Re-printed from *The Inquirer*, London, with the kind permission of its Editor.)

NOTES AND COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY

During the Festive Season I had a delightful letter from Miss Clara Codd who is now living in Johannesburg, South Africa telling me of that wonderful country which I know and love, outlining some of its most pressing problems. She closes in sending me every good wish for the New Year and asking me not to forget to convey the same to all her friends in Canada which I am very happy to do herewith. In my capacity as General Secretary it is somewhat thrilling to receive the same good wishes from the ends of the earth, for among them to mention but a few are such distant places as Casablanca, Singapore, Hungary, Norway and India. Thus has Theosophy spread over the face of the globe.

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Personally I have been somewhat remiss in sending out personal greetings, but since my retirement from the Hydro Commission and entering upon new duties in another sphere of activity I have had little time for the usual social amenities, nevertheless my feelings and sentiments remain the same and I hope that those who did not receive a card or note will accept my sincerest wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year during which I hope that Theosophy and all that it means will bring that same serenity, peace of mind and comfort that it has brought me.

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At the beginning of the New Year I am happy to announce that the following new members have joined the happy band of pilgrims:—Mr. Bruce A. Page, Miss Andree Smith and Mr. James Redweik all of the Toronto Lodge.

E. L. T.

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OFFICE NOTES

Isolated students and those unable to have access to Theosophical literature should avail themselves of the Traveling Library conducted by the Toronto Theosophical Society. There are no charges except for postage on the volumes loaned. For particulars write to the Librarian, 52 Isabella Street, Toronto, Ont.



We are now out of the 'Fluctuating Forties'—and what a decade it was!—the chaos of 1940 following the collapse of the Western front, the heroisms of Dunkirk, the agonies of 1941-1944, the wavering fortunes of the African cam-

paign, the exultation of Victory in 1945, the numbing shock of the atom bombs, the high hopes of the United Nations, the tenseness of the international situation in 1948 and 1949. What will the fifties bring? Perhaps they will be known as the 'flighty fifties', and be followed by 'the sober sixties'.



The *Inquirer* of London carried an interesting report of a lecture by Krishnamurti in Victoria Hall which we hope to reprint at a later date. The author speaks of an 'old Theosophist' who assured him that as Krishnamurti had refused the job of being a World Messiah, someone else has been selected and is coming from Australia within a few years' time!—not, we hope, with twelve ready-made disciples and a church equipped with bishops and archbishops—it's a bit too early to use that blueprint again. Perhaps the 'old Theosophist' was indulging in wishful thinking. Krishnamurti would echo the words of Jesus, "If they shall say unto, 'Behold, he is in the wilderness', go not forth; 'behold, he is in the inner chambers', believe them not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the East, and is seen even in the West, so shall be the presence of the Son of Man"



A new book on Atlantis has been published by Andrew Dakers *Gateway to Remembrance* but we have not seen a copy of it yet. One interesting point about it is that the writer, Frances Dale, declined any royalties from the sale of the book because she did not regard herself as its author—the book she said had been dictated to her by a priest who lived nine million years ago on the lost continent of Atlantis. She did accept her fees as typist.



Shadow of the Third Century, Dr. Alvin B. Kuhn's new book, was received shortly before the New Year and its 512 pages have not been fully explored.

What we have read has aroused our deep admiration. This is a masterly book and Dr. Kuhn proves by cogent arguments amply supported by quotations from a hundred authorities that "what has passed under the name of Christianity is not and really has never been Christianity at all." This book may be purchased in Canada through Mr. E. B. Dustan, Book Steward of Toronto Lodge.

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MRS. ALICE A. BAILEY

Word has just been received of the death of Mrs. Alice A. Bailey in New York on Thursday, December 15th. For many years she suffered from a heart ailment and several times her life was despaired of, but her indomitable spirit refused to surrender. This time, however, the physical vehicle failed to respond and at last she said to her husband, "Foster, I am going to let go" and then dropped off into an enduring sleep.

Mrs. Bailey was a member of the Theosophical Society in America and during her period of active membership, made many valuable contributions to the work of that organization. The Arcane School which grew out of a small study group in 1923, gradually absorbed more and more of her time. Thousands of students in all parts of the world were attracted to it and we understand that since the war, its growth in western Germany, Austria and Japan has been phenomenal; also that many students in Soviet controlled Germany and in Poland have enrolled as members. The work connected with this activity was enormous and Mrs. Bailey found it necessary to commence her daily labours at 4:30 a.m. in order to keep abreast of it.

The teachings given out in the several books published under her name were attributed by Mrs. Bailey to one who is

known as 'The Tibetan'. Mrs. Bailey was not clairvoyant nor clairaudient but, it would appear, did have an extraordinary capacity to enter into telepathic rapport with her Teacher.

Differences of opinion exist concerning these teachings, which depart at many points from the original message of H.P.B., but those who knew Mrs. Bailey personally will remember her with deep respect and affection. Wisdom, compassion, unquestioned integrity, a constant awareness of the spiritual basis of life, were characteristic of her and these qualities together with her unusual intellectual capacity, found expression in her continuous work for the welfare of humanity.

To Mr. Foster Bailey and her two daughters we send our sincere sympathy.

D. W. B.

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MONTREAL LODGE

The members of the Montreal Lodge held their second bazaar of the year, on December 3rd, in their lodge room at 1501 St. Catherine Street West.

Co-operation and good fellowship made it a very pleasant and successful event. In spite of the rather limited space at our disposal, a surprising number of friends dropped in.

Home-baked cookies, cakes, pies, and preserves were sold so fast that we could hardly keep up with the demand. Our white elephant table was cleared within the shortest possible time.

Tea was served by Mrs. Peter Sinclair and Mde. Rolland le Clair, who gave us their utmost support.

It was gratifying to see all our old friends and the fact that everyone worked together brought us most satisfactory monetary results.

(Mrs.) Rose Ovenden,
Vice-President.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Very often we speak of the work of the true theosophist in terms of metaphors or similes which refer to Light. We speak of spreading the Light, of making the Light shine, of trying to enlighten the world, of dissipating the darkness of ignorance with the Light of Truth.

A metaphor or an analogy cannot be forced beyond a certain point. It reveals the truth to us and serves us well enough to a certain degree; and then we have to recognize its limitations. And, if we would pursue the truth further, we must, at that stage, drop mere analogies and strive to enter into an understanding of things-in-themselves, seen as they are and no longer in terms of a comparison with something else.

But the metaphor or analogy of Light can serve us far and may suggest some thoughts than can be helpful to us in the work of the Theosophical Society.

Look at some bright and shining object, like a mirror or a bowl or tray of polished brass. It shines with the light which it does not absorb. A dark object which has not got a reflecting surface, like a piece of black cloth, has absorbed the light and so does not reflect it.

There is a challenge in this. Does it not mean that sometimes we try to give other people Light because we have failed to absorb it ourselves? Do we sometimes preach Theosophy because we are not theosophists, or Christianity because we are not Christians, or Socialism because we are not socialists, and so on?

It is indeed a common human experience that some of those who are most brilliant exponents of a subject or of an ideal, are people who have failed to live what they expound. Some people are brilliant reflecting surfaces and not lan-

terns shining in the darkness with their own light which shines from inside.

Reflected light, too, is modified in many respects. Something is taken from it and it is sometimes polarized or changed in various ways according to the nature of the surface from which it is reflected. It is not quite the real thing.

Yet the great Teachers have always had a use for reflected light. Very often a profound teaching has been wrapped up in a formula, put into a form which fits it to be passed on as reflected light. The Lord Buddha put many of his teachings into such a form, so that they could be learned by rote and passed on even by uncomprehending people down the ages. But if one who had eyes to see encountered that reflected light, it could give him illumination far beyond the comprehension of many of those who had acted as reflecting surfaces to pass that light on down the years.

To judge whether some particular shining is reflected light or a direct light that comes from within is no matter of applying external standards of judgment. Intellectual originality, for example, is no proof of the shining of a light from within; and, on the other hand, a lecture or exposition whose intellectual contents are derivative and second-hand can be the vehicle for a very full shining of a direct light from within. A brilliant, strong, self-consistent intellectual structure which is not lit by the direct, rich, warm light of love and humanity is of little worth beside a commonplace or even defective structure through which that light clearly shines.

But Light does not come only through teaching or lecturing, though that is a mode of shining with which we are

familiar and which we can recognize and isolate for the sake of an example. Every thought and feeling and action is a shining, and each may be a shining of reflected light or of direct light; and here again the great Teachers have always had a use for reflected light! for the externally prescribed action of the individual who does not shine with his own inner light may often presently evoke that shining, and we often do things before we discover from inside just why we do them.

And here, too, as in the case of exposition, we can have no superficial rule to tell us when we are seeing a direct shining from within, expressed in terms of action or human relationship, or when we are seeing only reflected light from some brilliant surface. Just as there are those who can construct a brilliant edifice of thought from which the real, warm, solid stuff of life, the true direct Light, is lacking, so also there are those who can create a wonderfully elegant and flawless pattern of behaviour from which the true light is absent. And the one through whose acts a true light shines may often seem to act like a fool or a clumsy person.

At the present time there is a good deal of clever fashioning of false lights, alluring and sometimes very powerful. They assert and offer superiority of adjustment, security, freedom from pain; but they are not the one true Light.

The Theosophical Society is concerned with both kinds of light, direct and reflected. As a quest for truth it is concerned with direct light. As a teaching body it is inevitably concerned sometimes with reflected light. None of the lights that we see about us in the Society or in the world can be substitutes for our own shining. They are invitations to embolden us to experiment with our own capacities for shining.

But here the metaphor may lead us astray; for "our" shining, though it certainly is ours, is also not ours. We shine truly when we stop trying to shine and, instead, step out of the way of the One Light that seeks to shine through us.

Hugh Shearman.

INDIVIDUALISM AND HUMANITARIANISM IN BUDDHISM

There are two contrasted themes in Buddhism, each seemingly contradicting the other. In the teachings of the Lord Buddha we find Individualism carried to the utmost limit, but at the same time there is taught also Humanitarianism of the loftiest kind. The Lord's teaching was that men are being carried away on three currents, which are those of desire, anger and illusion.

The Pali word for desire, *raga*, does not cover merely bodily lusts as usually understood, but every kind of desire, even of the highest aspiration, if it is inward-turned. Constantly men of spiritual life become so immersed in the problem of each in his own self, that they do not realize that after all each individual is one link in a great chain, which is Humanity.

The word *dosa*, is translated as hatred, but it covers more than violent anger, since the word signifies also every kind of resentment, impatience and irritation, however small it may be.

The third stream is *moha*, which is usually translated as illusion. Perhaps it is only at the final stage toward Liberation that a man understands what the word signifies, which is the faculty of seeing "the-thing-as-it-is." We little realize how we are surrounded by a fog of religious, national and cultural traditions, as also by the subtle tradition of our own temperament, brought from

past lives. As we try to examine anything outside of ourselves, we see each thing distorted, as a straight stick looks bent because of the refracting medium of the water in which half of the stick is immersed.

In the Lord's teaching the continual emphasis is that each man by himself must 'work out his salvation with diligence'. Even the Lord Himself is not more than a fingerpost showing the Way; He is not a "Saviour" who carries on His shoulders others who are aiming to "cross the stream" to Nirvana. In Buddhism, then, we have the ancient Hindu teaching, 'See the Atman by the Atman', meaning that each individual must see the great Self by means of the little self within him. It is this teaching, when dissociated from Humanitarianism, that brought India into a great tragedy. In one of the *Mahatma Letters*, the Adept Morya thus describes the glory of India when Buddhism was the main influence, and the loss to India when the influence of Buddhism passed away:

There was a time when, from sea to sea, from the mountains and deserts of the north to the grand woods and downs of Ceylon, there was but one faith, one rallying cry—to save humanity from the miseries of ignorance in the name of Him who taught first the solidarity of all men. How is it now? Where is the grandeur of our people and of the one Truth? These, you may say, are beautiful visions which were once realities on earth, but had flitted away like the light of a summer's evening. Yes; and now we are in the midst of a conflicting people, of an obstinate, ignorant people seeking to know the truth yet not able to find it, for each seeks it only for his own private benefit and gratification, without giving one thought to others. Will you, or rather they, never see the true meaning and explanation of that great wreck of desolation which was

come to our land and threatens all lands—yours first of all? It is *selfishness and exclusiveness* that killed ours, and it is selfishness and exclusiveness that will kill yours—which has in addition some other defects which I will not name. The world has clouded the light of true knowledge, and selfishness will not allow its resurrection, for it excludes and will not recognize the whole fellowship of all those who were born under the same immutable natural law.

It is this tendency to self-centred salvation that is avoided in Buddhism by the true Buddhist who applies the teaching given by the Lord: 'Just as a mother loves her child, her only child, so let a man love all beings'. In another place it is mentioned how the man on the road to true Nirvana radiates to the four quarters, and to above and below, tenderness and hope and benediction.

It is because of this wonderful blend of highest Individualism and perfect Humanitarianism, embodied in the personality of the Lord Buddha himself, that one of the great Adepts, known in Theosophical circles as the Mahā Chohan, speaks of how the Adepts are 'the devoted followers of that spirit incarnate of absolute self-sacrifice, of philanthropy, divine kindness, as of all the highest virtues attainable on this earth of sorrow, the man of men, Gautama Buddha'.

No purer expression of this lofty compassion, characteristic of Buddhism, can be found than in H. P. Blavatsky's *Voice of the Silence*:

Let thy Soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.

Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain before thyself has wiped it from the sufferer's eye.

But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain; nor ever brush it off until the pain that caused it is removed.

These tears, O thou of heart most merciful, these are the streams that irrigate the fields of charity immortal. 'Tis on such soil that grows the midnight blossom of Buddha, more difficult to find, more rare to view, than is the flower of the Vogay tree. It is the seed of freedom from rebirth. It isolates the Arhat both from strife and lust, it leads him through the fields of being unto the peace and bliss known only in the land of silence and non-being.

Will the blend of perfect Individualism and most pitiful Humanitarianism, once upon a time truest Buddhism, become once again an influence in the world?

C. JINARAJADASA,

President, Theosophical Society
(Reprinted from *The Middle Way*)

SOME REFLECTIONS

ON REINCARNATION

BY OLIVE OLTCHER

Reincarnation, one of the fundamental concepts of Theosophy, is based primarily on the ideas of justice and evolution. Our sense of justice is outraged at the thought of one man sent forth on his earth journey equipped with all the advantages of success and another with several counts already against him. If there be justice, this situation must have evolved from some conditions and actions set up in the past by each individual himself.

Compassionate people look kindly upon the hypothesis, and its disproof has never to my knowledge been seriously attempted, but it remains for the individual to verify the tenet himself, if he can. Certain mystical knowledge is claimed by some which, at least to them, is sufficient proof. The early mystery schools taught the doctrine and perhaps satisfied their initiates by adumbration or proof, that reincarnation was a fact. The only religions to

repudiate it today are the Christian and Mohammedan, and within the Christian Church it has been acknowledged by various sects. Giordano Bruno, J. B. van Helmont, David Hume, and many another mental titan accepted it. But the label is bandied about as if everybody meant the same thing, when, in fact, modern Theosophists mean something different than did the Bakongs of Borneo, for instance, who believe their dead reincarnate as bear-cats.

From the Theosophical viewpoint, let us examine the evolutionary factor, fundamental to this philosophical concept. Theosophists argue that if evolution be a fact, reincarnation also must be implicit, since Man's evolution, to be such, must progress from stages anterior to the human kingdom, to supra-human categories. This, obviously, does not happen in the course of one incarnation. Also, say the Theosophists, the "karma" or results of one's activities, thoughts, etc., on this stratum of being must be rewarded or expiated as the case may be, within the same framework of existence. Along such lines of reasoning is the theory of reincarnation justified by many thinking people in the West.

Evolution is a process whereby elements, qualities, aspects, or groups of differentiated characteristics of a being progress from a less-perfected to a more efficient or more complete state or stage. This being so, say the Theosophists, misconceptions like the old chestnut about beating, or even eating, one's own grandmother, are ridiculous since no one comes back in a less evolved body than that which he has left.

Yet, involution is as evident a fact as is evolution. From a teleological viewpoint, we admit the emerging, sustaining, and final destruction of races or nations as part of a greater cosmic plan of evolution, yet we are constrained from justifying a man's descent and fall

from grace on any such principle. That he may serve as a horrible example to the rest of us is hardly a proper philosophical attitude either, but we may tentatively offer him as Exhibit One in establishing our thesis that there is an inverse-evolution whereby a man may become less human than he was to begin with. Nor can we set ourselves up as judges, except in extreme cases, of an individual's standing in the evolutionary scheme of things. He may be slipping fast as, say, a sadist, and yet fulfill an esthetic function as a creator of great beauty in one of the arts. We have to go easy with our *non sequiturs*. He's climbing up the evolutionary ladder with his right foot and slipping down with his left. Eventually, should his evil tendencies overwhelm his whole being he will reach a negative evolutionary stage and we may then, and only then, point our finger and throw our stone.

All right. This hypothetical and potential Mephistopheles proceeds to degrade himself until at his death he has practically reached his moral nadir. Shouldn't he, then, by the same law of justice we prate so much about, receive in a subsequent incarnation, a body befitting the disintegrating character of his ego? Don't punishments fit crimes in supernal Courts of Justice either? Disregarding a theory merely because it may be ugly is not worthy of searchers for Truth. When we begin to gold-leaf our beliefs, we are knocking on a false door that never will open.

There is another tenet of reincarnation that has made me ponder again and again. "Time" is usually considered no object in the evolutionary pattern. It is immaterial to Theosophists how many times we return to complete our cycle of experience on this globe. But, personally, it makes quite a difference to me, especially when one's very dear friends show a tendency to evolve at a speedy rate which may merit them a transfer-

ence to some higher planetary chain of life. Then again, call me a product of my age if you will, but why, if the goal of evolution be so grand, couldn't the plan include, instead of one long, long path of reincarnations, a plurality (innumerable suits me) of *parallel* lives which would gather experience of many differing varieties and exploit all the categories of existence from the densest to the phenomenal, and also the more tenuous? Perhaps this is so and we cannot recall our other miscellaneous selves, except in dreams sometimes, or in vague intuitional flashes?

I was once very sure what the purpose of life was; now I wonder, like the veriest beginning ponderer. Only of this am I sure, that we should avoid dogmatism no matter how dear our concept may be to ourselves. After all, there is so little we *know*, and that little may be surprisingly erroneous in many of its facets.

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CHARITY

The Theosophical idea of charity means personal exertion for others; personal mercy and kindness; personal interest in the welfare of those who suffer; personal sympathy, forethought and assistance, in their troubles and needs. Theosophists do not believe in giving money through other people's hands, or organizations. We believe in giving to the money greater power and effectiveness by our personal contact and sympathy with those who need it. We believe in relieving the starvation of the soul, as much if not more than the emptiness of the stomach; for gratitude does more good to the man who feels it, than to him for whom it is felt.

In these words, taken from the Key to Theosophy, is summed up the Theosophical attitude on Charity. It will be noted that much greater emphasis is placed on our individual state of mind, than on the results to be accomplished. The one denotes the setting up of causes which will also produce future effects, whereas the other has to do with the amelioration of effects the causes of which were put into operation at some time in the past. Herein, a very important law of nature is involved, namely, that every external motion, act, gesture, whether voluntary or mechanical, organic or mental, is produced and preceded by internal feeling or emotion, will or volition, and thought or mind. Man, as is the Universe, is worked and guided from within outwards, that is, the direction of the energy radiating from the Individuality is centrifugal and positive. When it is thus, the Theosophist will have forgotten his personality, for he will be living in the eternal and identifying himself with the Atma. Should this lofty contact really rouse him, he becomes as one of the divine in

his desire to give rather than to receive, in his wish to help rather than be helped, in his resolution to feed the hungry rather than to take manna from Heaven himself. His nature has been transformed, and the selfishness which prompts men's actions in ordinary life will have already deserted him.

But when selfishness lurks in and clouds the mind, the direction of the life force immediately becomes centripetal, that is, tending toward a centre. That centre is the personality which craves a place in the sun, where it can enjoy recognition, honour and praise, and superiority over the average man. Every act, including charity, has for its motive, some reward, either here or hereafter, and the temporary good is offset by the generation of future evil.

In one of his letters to A. P. Sinnett, the Master K.H. stressed this point. He said:

"Beware then, of an uncharitable spirit, for it will rise up like a hungry wolf in your path, and devour the better qualities of your nature which have been springing into life. Broaden instead of narrowing your sympathies; try to identify yourself with your fellows, rather than to contract your circle of affinity. Friend, beware of Pride and Egoism, two of the worst snares for the feet of him who aspires to climb the high paths of knowledge and Spirituality. Unselfishness, and an eager readiness for self-sacrifice for the good of others; what a 'multitude' of sins does not this cover? It is but a truism, yet I say it, that in adversity alone can we discover the real man. It is a true manhood when one boldly accepts one's share of the collective Karma of the group one works with, and does not permit oneself to be embittered, and to

see others in blacker colours than reality, or to throw all blame upon one "black sheep," a victim, specially selected." Letter lxvi.

If this attitude of charitableness is a proper one to assume towards individuals, it follows that it can also be assumed towards the group, or the Society to which we belong. Too often, it seems to me, we fail to take any personal interest in the welfare of our Lodge, or of our Section, and still less of the Society as a whole. As a result, we leave the entire management in the hands of a few willing persons who carry on from year to year as best they can. This is not a desirable influence in any movement. To be charitable, each and every member must learn to direct his or her energies outwards. This can be done in several ways, by taking an active part in the discussions at our meetings, by assisting in the work of the Lodge, and by giving of our means as we are able to the common Cause. When all shoulders are put to the wheel in an united, power and momentum are given to the Movement. But if our energies are thwarted by being focused in opposite or different directions, no worthwhile result can be achieved. This is sound common sense which can be observed over and over again in any environment, and it is at the same time a practical application of theosophical principles.

E. P. W.

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The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour have no limit.

The principle which gives life dwells in us, and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard or seen, or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception.

Each man is his own absolute law-giver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

These truths, which are as great as is life itself, are as simple as the simplest mind of man. Feed the hungry with them.—Idyll of the White Lotus.

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